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## Thoroughly modernist intimacies

William H. Gass

EDWARD BURNS (Editor)  
*The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten*  
Volume One: 1913-1935  
432pp.  
Volume Two: 1935-1946  
901pp.  
New York: Columbia University Press.  
\$75.00 cloth.  
0231 06308 3

On the evening Carl Van Vechten met Mabel Dodge, he was handed a copy of Gertrude Stein's *Portrait of Mabel Dodge at the Villa Curwin*, which he immediately and judiciously admired for its binding of Florentine wallpaper. Those semi-sweet years before our world wars are certainly more than three-quarters of a century distant from us (post-modern time spoils faster than fish, yesterday's death has already smelled for a month), so it is difficult now to appreciate the fresh re-use of the plain and stale in the first sentence of Mabel's ("The days are wonderful and the nights are wonderful and the life is pleasant"), because the space it opened has been trampled to the point of obliteration, and the little bump in one's path provided by the third "the" can be ignored more readily today than it was then. Nor is the abrupt mystification of the words which follow, in Stein's best or worst *Tender Buttons* manner, likely to affront us ("Bargaining is something and there is not that success. The intention is what if application has that accident results are reappearing. They did not darken. That was not an adulteration.") We have survived severer idiosyncrasies than this, and we just don't care.

Because Van Vechten's interest in photography drew him to the magazine, he soon encountered Stein's portraits of Matisse, Picasso and Cézanne, in Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work*; pieces which Stieglitz published, he said, since he didn't understand them. The portrait of Cézanne is a strikingly tuneful study in tonality and difference. Its musical elements might have made an impression on Van Vechten, who had done some reporting on musical matters for the press and had already begun to write some of the essays collected in his first book, *Music after the Great War*. Van Vechten had grown up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and like many Midwesterners he wished to shock for good the corn he felt his birthplace

represented. There was no "wild west" in his life, nor in Pound's Idaho, or Stein's Allegheny, or in Hemingway's Oak Park, or Eliot's St Louis; there was only Stodge City. He was eager to experience the "higher" things, and to embrace whatever was foreign, startling, new. He was therefore attracted rather than put off by this unconventional prose, if prose was what it was. Nevertheless, he received considerable assurance of Stein's genius upon reading *Three Lives*, and in particular from the central and most substantial story, "Melanctha".

"Melanctha" is a modernist masterpiece, and the other two stories are sufficiently strong for the book's little bow to Flaubert's *Trois Contes* not to be presumptuous. The characters in "Melanctha" are black, of course, and this alone would have appealed to Van Vechten, who had already championed the music, literature and theatre of black people in the columns of the newspapers. Gertrude Stein's recreation of the rhythms of black speech (as many, including Van Vechten, believed, although I choose to be sceptical), the rich musicality of the language, its continuously figural character, the slow flowering of its powerful social sympathies, combined in a work both radiant and approachable, had a lasting effect. As we learn from these letters, one of the many little jokes Stein and Van Vechten shared was his habit of inserting at least a reference to her in each of his books, so that she would write wondering whether she would be in his next, and then respond pleased because she found she was. "I liked the book and then I always like me in it. I always want to know at once, Am I in it. And very nicely I am always in it." When Van Vechten came to write his own novel about black people, which he called, rather too crudely for our time, *Nigger Heaven*, he had his heroine improbably quote from memory an entire page of "Melanctha". It falls through the issue of his text like a rain of stones.

He wrote an article about his latest enthusiasm which he finally got into the *New York Times*, though it was set safely away on the financial page, and Mabel Dodge wrote to Stein about the promised appearance of the article and her new fan. So by the time Van Vechten reached Paris and came in 27 rue de Fleuries for a visit, each knew of the other. The omens were good. Generally, Gertrude Stein admired her admirers.

But Van Vechten was preceded by his ex-wife and his shirl. He had arrived in Paris in time to witness the unruliness which almost broke up and certainly spoiled the first per-

formance of *The King of Spring*, and, fascinated, he had attended its second performance as well. Perhaps, this time, he might see and hear Miss Toklas and Miss Stein shared his box. They privately wondered who he was. A week earlier someone had brought the recently divorced Anna Snyder Van Vechten to dinner. Gertrude Stein Alice write in the *Autobiography* that "Mrs Van Vechten told the story of the tragedy of her married life but Gertrude Stein was not particularly interested". This foreknowledge, however, allowed Stein to tease and hewider Van Vechten during his initial visit, when he and his shirl were recognized. She would slip bits of inside information about his past into the dinner-table conversation as though she had secretly gone through his medicine chest, valise and pockets.

So this collected correspondence begins with a flurry of notes, postcards and cables, mostly about meetings. And for some years, enquiries and gossip concerning Mabel Dodge (once their intermediary) are a common subject. Gertrude frequently wants news. Carlo, as he calls himself, reports on his efforts to push and place Stein's work. Light-hearted flattery prevails. But these letters are almost entirely "unhushed". Rarely is there a full account of some occasion. Never, I might almost say, is there a thought, certainly not the extension of one beyond the know. One will search nearly in vain for an arresting turn of phrase. Gertrude Stein's girlish breathlessness increases as their intimacy deepens, as does Van Vechten's archness. They dress their affection in ill-purses. They keep intently in touch, but the touch is light. In them we can find some of the chilling whimsicality of Pound's letters, and, from Van Vechten, some of the poet's generosity and sponsorship; but there is none of Lawrence's fierce anger or Byron's bluntness, none of Flaubert's critical intelligence, or the ability of Henry James to present his recipients, in a flourish, with a profile of his mind. The elegance of Kents is wholly absent, and there is certainly no sign of Rilke's careful and considerable artistry. There is some gush from both sides which manages to sound a little insincere even when it's meant, but mainly there is "hi there", and "thank you", and "what's up?"

Both wrote a lot of letters to a whole lot of people. The telephone cord had not yet strangled the epistolary spirit, nor had increasing frequency of encounter eliminated the need for written words. Just as people tend to dislike

social pauses and the habitually silent, they require the little love-yns that accompany presents, the brief billets of pre-printed appreciation, insipid postcards. The written or printed word is wet, and nourishes our roots, even when made of dismal drops. It is a need whose diminution stunts the soul. There have been periods in the past when people wrote notes to one another while staying in the same house, at the same hotel or resort. Rilke clearly liked to take his leaves so he could flatter and fill up his friends with his pen. Even the phone offers that advantage - of distance, safe haven - and many a teenage klatch breaks up so that each can go home and phone.

The letter forces us, first of all, into a form, it compels us to think as we write, to correct, to hne, not to hem and haw, to stutter, to repent, to yawn, to fill the mouthpiece with a waste of meaningless sound that will drain away into the line. You can put a knee or stir a pot or drive a car while on the phone. You can lie with more confidence, unless the line is bugged, for your words will not be travelling through some Xerox machine come morning. Quarrels carried on by post are of a different order of being from a series of oral retorts. When the receiver has been put down, the listener will be empty-headed, with only an immediate memory to search, but with not a single thought to re-read, a single feeling to fold over, or expulsive to ink out, and nothing to carry into court. No one ever filled a plume with beauty.

Gertrude Stein's long stay in France, frequent travels, or visits to the country, made it important to her to write and receive mail regularly, but it is interesting to observe what she was ready to send herself to her friends, and what she was willing to welcome. If we look at the letters she wrote to other people (to Sherwood Anderson, for example, in the collection edited by Ray Lewis White, or the letters to himself which Samuel M. Steward gathered up in *Dearest Sunny*), we shall find, I think, a remarkable consistency of tone. It is Alice's letters, often to the same correspondents, which are fuller, filkier, friendlier. Much of the Stein/Van Vechten exchange feels ploned in. That is to say: letters matter to them, but the letter did not.

Van Vechten proved a firm friend. He not only wrote about her often, and always fulsomely, he acted as her literary agent, peddling *The Making of America* nearly door-to-door like an encyclopaedia salesman; he talked her up among his several New York crowds, wrote explanatory and pre-emptive prefaces, made

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collections, and praised her publications when they finally, often obscurely, appeared; he sent her his friends and useful acquaintances, usually bearing brief yet effective notes of introduction ("This letter precludes the approach of two of the nicest people left in the world: Essie and Paul Robeson. But you know already what I think about them!"), he met the boat when she and Alice returned to lecture-tour America, and held her nervous and excited hand when she took her first plane rides. Although Gertrude always said she was delighted by what he wrote about her work, there is little evidence that he understood a great deal of it. He often tended to think her so-called hermetic style was mere music, when, in fact, it was frequently in code, and much over-meant.

Van Vechten was a superb cultural scout, and while his own broad gifts were thin, he was loyal, generous, had a decent social spirit, and quite a lot of good luck with his choices. He was the first in America to write on Stein and Stravinsky; he bent the drum for Diaghilev and befriended many avant-garde painters; he helped the young poet, Langston Hughes, to find a publisher, and championed the cause of black writers, performers and musicians, playing no small role in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. As if he knew his own literary efforts would not be enough to secure for him a place in history, he tried at least to immortalize his helping hand by hoping it would gleam while showing others into the light. It was not Gertrude Stein alone whose friendship he earned by his enthusiasm and support. Present and past were equally attractive arenas of rescue for him, and in a collection of essays called *Excavations*, published in 1926, Van Vechten attempted to take a number of authors and composers from the neglect of the earth and hold them up for a fresh look. Van Vechten's own image, however (as his biographer, Bruce Kellner, points out), is archaeological, and one can bear one's trophy, from such sites and excavations, only into the museum, and not to the public square.

Like many a professional enthusiast, Van Vechten misses the mark as often as he strikes it (still a good score), and he seems, even when the artists he recommends have unsettling depths, to be influenced by social factors and to prefer, in the work, certain surface effects. He favours blacks or women certainly, or the otherwise neglected; he likes an idiosyncratic look, a little mystery; he is charmed by charm (his outsiders must not be real bandits); he wants to be amused, teased and pleasantly affronted: the strange alerts him, the pleasure draws him in, the mystery allows him to explain his interest to others. And he understood quite well what a tease Gertrude was, and how captivating she could be, both in person and in print. He wrote to rescue Satie, Sullivan and Delibes, and was among the first to lift a shovel of oblivion from Melville's name. He also puffed Ronald Firbank, Edgar Saltus and Arthur Machen, although nothing he said could dispel the resolute gloom around the reputations of Henry Blake Fuller or M. P. Shiel, nor has anyone been able to do much for Hugh Walpole or Ouida since.

In short, Carl got so crazy around that Dorothy Parker said he "wrote with his tongue in someone else's cheek" — a smart remark which, had I had the wit to think of it, I would have rapidly found a victim to fix it on. Meanwhile, by his own account, Van Vechten was being bored by George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce and Sigmund Freud. Flippant dismissal, even of a King's/Queen's kind, was also one of Gertrude Stein's weapons.

Van Vechten was preparing a volume of selected writings for Random House when she died, and she appointed him her literary executor in her will. In the shadow of her own obscurity, he persevered, editing for the Yale Press her posthumous works.

If these letters do not have a great inherent interest for the ordinary reader, they possess a value of another kind. Edward Burns, who edited a collection of Alice Toklas's letters, entitled *Staying on Alone*, has arranged and annotated those with extraordinary skill and diligence. In the first place, he has been careful to preserve the physical and inscriptional integrity of the text, not only telling us that this or that letter bears the famous circular "rose motif" of Gertrude Stein, or in Carl Van Vechten's case, the "A Little Too Much" motto, and

noting when the paper is flowered or otherwise embellished, or, for postcards, describing the picture that's there; but also retaining significant mistakes and other peculiarities, as well as the essentials of their manufacture — the place, the postmark, the signature and salutation — so that we have, as nearly as possible, the actual message in our hands. To measure the effect of this thoroughness, one has only to compare some of Van Vechten's letters as they appear in *The Flowers of Friendship*, a volume of letters to Gertrude Stein which Donald Gallup edited some years ago. It is not a dismissable detail to learn, for instance, that Van Vechten misspelled Alice Toklas's name for years, referring to her as Miss Taklos, apparently without serious annoyance either to Gertrude or to Alice, to whom these letters were no doubt shown. Desiring a smoother reading and an unproblematic text, Gallup quietly removed such errors.

But because Burns has so carefully supplied us with the surrounding climate and terrain, an entire world is suggested — a history is implied — by the least little note or missive; and what might have been a rather pallid set of transmissions soon resembles the structure of a complex and massive post-modern novel, so that the path of our eye as it moves back and forth from text to gloss to note is not merely a series of nervous interruptions but rather a weaving of detail and forgotten data to depict, as on a vast map, a pair of lifetimes and thus a little of an age.

For example, on September 3, 1923, Carl Van Vechten writes from New York a reply to Gertrude's words of appreciation for his novel, *The Blind Bow-Boy*, just out. A preceding note has informed us that the novel's name was initially "Daniel Matthews' Tutor"; that in the second draft the title was changed to its present one, which refers to a masked statue of Eros in the heroine's garden; and that expectations of its salaciousness had led to a complete sale of the trade edition of 3,500 copies before publication. (If we refer to Kellner's excellent biography of Van Vechten [no doubt Edward Burns's source], we learn, of course, much more, but here we have been given just the right amount, and to measure that amount is a good editor's delicate business.) Carl is happy that a friend, Hunter Staggs, whom he had sent to the rue Fleurus to visit, has been well received. We are told of Staggs's journal, *The Reviewer*, and what of Stein's he would eventually print. Van Vechten informs Gertrude that Edmund Wilson has a page about her in the September *Vanity Fair*. Our editor and length of yarn through this labyrinth supplies us with the title ("A Guide to Gertrude Stein"), and reports that she wrote to Wilson about the article after she read it, and that, since the letter was important to her, she made two drafts of it. Burns describes the physical condition and location of these drafts, and then quotes part of the text that went to Wilson. It is quite unlike her letters to Van Vechten because in it she discusses intention and theory (in her own way, of course). With regard to the status of portraits and stories, she tells Wilson, who has been discussing her portraits when you realize that to take the commonest example the bible lives not by its stories but by its texts you see how inevitably one wants neither harmony, pictures stories nor portraits . . . to continue you have to be persistent and stories don't persist they repeat and they vary . . . all literature is to me me, that isn't as bad as it sounds. Some one complained that I always stopped while I was driving to read the signposts even when I knew the road and all I could explain was that I am fond of reading, well I am, I like people and politics and painting but I am really fond of reading, there that's all.

Here, as happens rarely in her communications with Van Vechten, a true Stein line flashes forth: "All literature is to me me."

In a very contemporary way, Stein wants to realize a text and not a tale, for the tale escapes its telling, just as there may be many portraits of Napoleon — here on horseback, there on foot — but only those, like Velázquez of his Philip, call upon the king to serve his image and to resemble his likeness. Like Rilke, in the same city, and nearly at the same time, Stein had learned the lesson of Cézanne.

Back to Carl's letter. He says that he has heard not a word about her book — he means *The Making of America*, still with Knopf — and concludes: "You promise to do another portrait of me twenty years after naturally

delights me. I like your portraits. I like your work. I like you. Not a word from Mabel [Dodge]; this either means that Tony [Luhán] is interesting or uninteresting. D.H. Lawrence has been in New York, but I have not seen him." Van Vechten writes the word "love" and abruptly signs off, but Burns arrives to inform us that Lawrence had been in New York for the publication of *Studies in Classic American Literature*, and if we have been reading the correspondence to this point we know all about Mabel Dodge and her new husband, Tony Luhan, an American Indian. Our editor is not finished with us, for this *Brief* is longer than we thought. On its backside, Stein drafted a review of Hemingway's *Three Stories and Ten Poems*, as well as a cover letter to the monthly review, *Ex Libris*, which after all did not publish it. Eventually, the Paris edition of the *Chicago Tribune* did, and now in front of us the review appears, including her misspelling of "Roosevelt" as "Rosevelt."

All this movement back and forth between notes and text, comments and their causes, may bewilder, tire, and eventually bore many readers; but those who enjoy ontological tangles and the devious routes by which facts arrive in history will find everything to their liking. If I had risked the unsettling of the page with a complete account of Van Vechten's bland dispatch, we should have found this nine-line note putting us in touch with ten people, four books (one of them the Bible), five articles or stories, two publishers, two magazines, one newspaper, four cities, a letter written about an article, a letter written about a review, a letter literally written on a letter, as well as innumerable dates and references and associations; so that eventually one has a sense of how any action (such as getting married or publishing a book or telling a lie) dispels itself in rumour and reading, writing and reverberation, commentary and concern; and furthermore how the effects of that action come together again in places like the pages of these two volumes of correspondence, a space not yet history but on its margins, and at a point where the mind is eagerly scooping up facts only to let them fly loose suddenly like a fistful of pasta released into its pot, where other sides and turmoils will contain the disseminated bits; for the meaning of Gertrude Stein herself, or D. H. Lawrence, or Tony Luhan, is modified, enlarged as words themselves are, through constant interactions, interpenetrations, abrasions and collisions, by coming out of one context to arrive at another like a truck through dust. For a time Stein tried to scrub words clean of their accumulated meanings as you might such a dirty vehicle, so that the original signs would show again upon their sides, but that simply required her to find fresh contexts where the hidden roots of words would stand up publicly as though they were stems.

On April 26, 1932, Van Vechten sends Stein a postcard with his reproduction of Jo Davidson's photograph of Jo Davidson's now famous bust of Gertrude as one side, and it is here, in this nest of ontological otherness (person, bust, picture, copy, card), that he first confers upon Alice and Gertrude (as she often signed herself) the dubious *nom de berceau*, "Woojums!" (The exclamation point is attached like the leash of a small dog; it can be given the slip but not often.) This moment may not seem very exciting, and it isn't, but "Woojums!" will not fade to a grin like the Cheshire Cat; and is one of the more significant turns this correspondence takes.

In his novel, *Parties*, Van Vechten bestowed the name upon a gin drink made with baccard, biters, absinthe, grenadine and lemon. I think it fair to assume that any person who had to suffer the transfer of the title would have to be intoxicating company. Indeed, since the ratio of gin to baccard was 5 to 1 and all the remaining ingredients were dashes, it is a curiously infantile label for such a potent concoction, and I think one would be normally inclined to resist its application to oneself. Van Vechten had given up strong drink, and perhaps needed Woojums of another kind to console him for his loss.

Though the name doesn't instantly catch on (outside the nursery, it could only designate dogs of sticky candy), it is Alice who most seems to enjoy being a Woojums, for as this game of names begins, Van Vechten signs as "Woojums"; only others are. Alice signs herself

"Woojums Alice", perhaps in revenge for Van Vechten's misspelling of Toklas in the early days. He corrects her: "Dear dear DEAR Woojums!" (pronounced Woo-jums-Ez, please). By 1935, Baby Woojums is born and the entire family is in place. Van Vechten is Papa Woojums, Alice is Mama Woojums, of course, and on these rare occasions when Fania, Papa Woojums's wife, is included, she is called Empress or Madame Woojums.

Burns speaks of these titles as terms of endearment, and points out that they came into important use during Stein's lecture tour of America in 1934–5. They indicate, as he says, that these friends felt they formed a family unit, and in this sense they are not far from the political or religious use of "brother", "sister", "comrade", "father", "mother-superior", and so on — uses which express a wished-for fact, however, as they project friendly or family ties into far wider, higher, remoter realms. I do wonder whether Carl, Gertrude and Alice actually spoke to one another in this way ("Mama Woojums, would you fetch Baby Woojums her book?" — actually it would have been "his book"), or whether these names were used only in correspondence. Certainly Van Vechten had become, for Gertrude, a father figure, just as Alice was her caring mum. These surrogate relations are not uncommon. One might even approve of the clear-sighted recognition of the situation which the use of these names requires. But the replacement of one's real name by a nickname is not an entirely harmless act. It suggests an appropriation of the person by a role, and their confinement to a single sphere of life. Rilke was fond of replacing the names of some of his female correspondents with fanciful sobriquets, "Benvenuta", "Merline" and the like, until he was called "Doctor Serafico", in return. In this way these women became creatures of his own invention, alive within the lines of his letters, and outside those letters no more than the letters allowed. The names which lovers often confer on one another single out and commemorate one rather narrow area of affection. They are frequently regressive, returning the lovers to a pre-sexual condition, and signalling the presence of altered emotions, as genital urges become maternal surounds, for instance. It is also the admission or acknowledgement of power. "Who loves ya, baby?" is a political question. Stein is very aware of the importance of given names, as she writes rather forcefully (in lieu of evidence) at the beginning of *Four in America*: "Really and truly the surname makes no difference, it is the first or Christian name that counts, that is what makes one as they are. Of course you all know this."

Even the admirers of Gertrude Stein (among whom I like to think I constitute a crowd) must take note of the infantilisms in her style, of the refusal of a clearly brilliant abstract intelligence to come to grips with ideas in an adult and responsible way, with her habit of babbling, doodling and simply playing around, with her little-boy bragging, with the breathless girlish gush which occasionally overcomes her prose, with the amount of childish sibling rivalry in her affections. Her brother, Leo, played the papa for a time (Hemingway, we remember, was called Papa, but not by Stein), and for a time Gertrude acquiesced to it. However, people to whom she tended to stand in a sibling relation did not survive in her affections as surely as those two who treasured her as boy Baby Woojums, both the nursing and the tyrant of the home.

That from Alice's point of view, at any rate, Gertrude had really become her given name is demonstrated by the extraordinary telegram she sent to Van Vechten to inform him of Gertrude's death: "BABY, WOOJUMS PASSED SUDDENLY TODAY. YOUR LOVING MAMA WOOJUMS." I do not know whether Alice or the wireless was responsible for the misspelling of the family name. In any case, at the time of her death, Baby Woojums was seventy-two.

Theodore Dreiser and the critics, 1911–1982: A bibliography with selective annotations (305pp. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow; distributed in the UK by Bailey Brothers and Swinfen, Warner House, Folkestone, Kent CT19 6PH. £27.50. 8108 1837 X) by Jeanette Boswell has recently been published. This volume belongs to the Scarecrow Author Bibliographies series.

## A man in his humour

P. N. Furbank

MARTIN STANNARD  
Evelyn Waugh: The early years, 1903–39  
537pp. Dent. £14.95.  
046046322

Standing back from the first volume of Martin Stannard's new biography of Evelyn Waugh one registers the impression that, for good or evil, it is a discussion rather than a narrative. The story-line is present, indeed, but so often interrupted by argumentation over issues of fact, by summaries of Waugh's writings and by critical analyses, that we might be reading a life of some classic author (Wordsworth or Cicero) with the outlines of whose life we are expected to be familiar. This is not necessarily a criticism of Stannard, for it may be inherent in the whole genre of the "critical biography" — always in some respects an awkward one; and he has certainly amassed a great deal of new information, much of it unavailable to Waugh's earlier biographer Christopher Sykes, and can fairly claim in certain directions to be "setting the record straight". He gives us, for the first time, the views of Waugh's first wife on the breakdown of their marriage — also an account of Waugh's love-life during the ensuing years, when he suffered an unrequited passion for Teresa Jungman and was pursued, to his discomfort, by Sir John Lavery's wife. We also get, in some detail, the very good story of Waugh as Arctic explorer in Spitzbergen: his intense contempt for pemmican and skis and his ineradicable conviction of re-enacting the last days of Captain Scott.

As so often with biographies, one is brought up rather short by what is said about "heredity". It would not be fair to tease Stannard, or no more than very mildly, for holding that people inherit things like "a talent for water-colour painting" — for this is a belief dear to so many biographers. Still, it is a very odd and beguiling belief, and one certainly unknown to genetic science. It is reassuring to find that Evelyn Waugh himself found it comical. "Ignorance of fashions in biological theory we still look to heredity — as our forebears looked to the stars — as the source of character", he wrote in *A Little Learning*. "When one of the young misbehaves, we muse: 'How like her poor uncle'; when one shows talent, we ask: 'Now where does he get that from?' and daily give intuitive assent to a proposition which confounds our reason."

Where perhaps one has more right to challenge Stannard, since he is in the business of re-interpreting Waugh, is for perpetuating certain cherished but false myths. There is for instance the gloss put on the most famous passage in *Vile Bodies* which makes it Waugh's *Waste Land* and an announcement of apocalyptic despair:

"Oh! Mine, what a lot of parties."  
... Masked parties. Savage parties. Victorian parties. Greek parties. Wild West parties. Russian parties. Circus parties, parties where one had to dress as somebody else, almost naked parties in St John's Wood, parties in flats and studios and houses and ships and hotels and night clubs. In windmills and swimming baths, tea parties at school where one ate mufins and meringues and tinned crab, parties at Oxford where one drank brown sherry and smoked Turkish cigarettes, dull dances in London and comic dances in Scotland and disgusting dances in Paris — all that succession and repetition of massed humanity . . . Those vile bodies . . .

Stannard endorses the "apocalyptic" interpretation, remarking that the passage is a late interpolation, possibly influenced by the breakdown of Waugh's first marriage; and he implicitly associates it with his religious conversion.

Now it does not need very close attention to the passage to see that this will hardly do; "tea parties at school where one ate mufins and meringues and tinned crab"; these affectionate words are not the ones in which a prophetic announcement of apocalypse or turns his back upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Nor, presumably, if Waugh really had conceived a religious horror of his earlier way of life or was therefore to write in "outrage at a culturally degraded society" would he have gone on frequenting frivolous society or writing frivolous novels — as he did. *For Scoop* is no less frivolous than *Vile Bodies* and *Bitter Pill* More Flags not much less so. The novel *Helena* is remorse-

lessly bright and frivolous; and frivolous, in a sense, is even *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*.

It is a mistake to come down too heavily on frivolity. For a frivolousness permitting of hints of compunction and glimpses of the tragic is, in Waugh's hands, a considerable artistic achievement; and it could only be sustained by a man still, and always, half in love with frivolity. Some admirable words that Waugh wrote in 1950 about Aldous Huxley's *Autic Hay* seem to put the point almost beyond dispute:



A detail from a photograph of Evelyn Waugh and his first wife, Evelyn Gardner; it is taken from the book reviewed here.

The dance winds through piazzas and alleys, under arches, round fountains and everywhere are the embellishments of the old religion. An ancient pagan feast, long christianized in name, is being celebrated in a Christian city . . . There is an insistent undertone, audible through the carnival music, saying all the time, not in Mrs. Vivash's "expiring" voice, that happiness is a reality.

Since 1923 Mr. Huxley has travelled far. He has done more than change climate and diet. I miss that undertone in his later work. It was because he was then so near the essentials of the human condition that he could write a book that is frivolous and sentimental and perennially delightful.

A word about humour is in place here. There is much to be said against Waugh as a man; his arrogance, snobbery and unkindness sometimes grow quite horrific. But his humour, so far as one can see, remained oddly innocent. (It was, we gather, the saving grace of his family life.) As Stannard rightly suggests, one cannot rule out the possibility that his prolonged persecution of his sometime Oxford tutor Crutwell helped eventually to drive the poor man insane. His motives, at all events, were pretty nasty; but the form of the joke — to spend so much time barking under Crutwell's windows — does just something to soften the offence.

Of course neither André Gide nor Thomas Mann would have gone barking under windows; and this puts one in mind of an illuminating remark by Martin Green in *Children of the Sun*: "throughout the period, including the years of political seriousness and left-wing commitment, English popular taste, even at the level of the popular press, was in alliance with the dandy aesthete, in one important phase of sensibility, the sense of humour. The snob-aesthete Evelyn Waugh was closer to the mass audience of England than would seem to a foreigner credible." Martin Green's label "dandy aesthete" for Waugh strikes me as extremely helpful; but we need to add the rider "renegade aesthete". One remembers Yeats's complaint to Aubrey Beardsley that modern artists were abandoning beauty for humour, and Waugh is a latter-day case in point. As a draughtsman he dabbled in "amusing" pastiches of Nolde and Wyndham Lewis, and as a novelist he glimpsed something new that could be done by an extreme parody away of all fictional elements apart from dialogue; but, unlike his master Ronald Firbank, he soon gave up any ambition towards radical "modernist" innovation and focused his great gifts on pleasing and entertaining the larger British public — one which found his outrageousness just of the kind that they could understand and relish. This was no prostitution of his talents, merely a

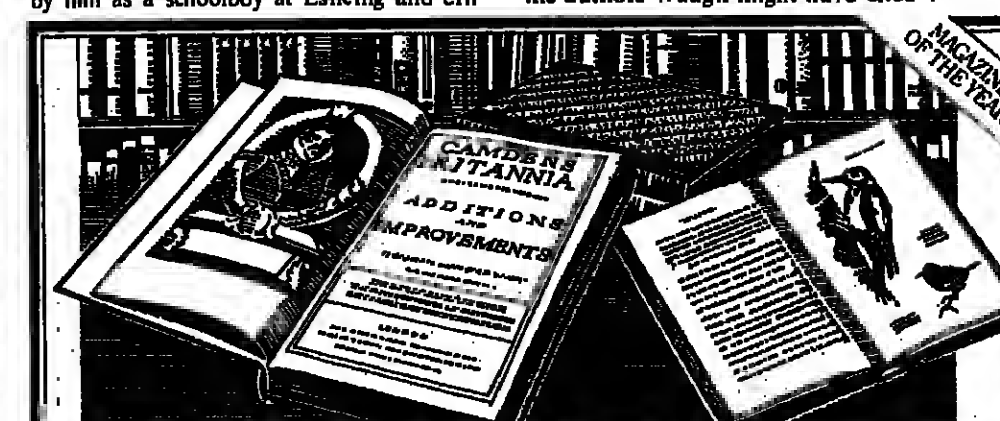
drawing of limits and narrowing of horizons. He was the sort of man (Max Beerholn was another) who takes very exact stock of his own abilities; and the mixture in him of unbridled worldly ambition with level-headed modesty as an artist is caught, if unkindly, in his own description of Constantius in *Helena*:

Constantius in his own eyes fell short of perfection. His talents comprised all that was needed — no more; a representative collection, not unique, but adequate; he would make do. His need was simple; not

played to rebuke the confessional tendencies of his friend Dudley Carew. Carew has a nice reminiscence of him at that time: "It was then Evelyn's custom . . . to glare as we passed and say: 'Saul on the hearth-rug, Carey?' and I would answer: 'Oh, Evelyn, that face!'" As for the "alien sensitive spirit in a crumbling civilisation", it is a shade too languid for a Waugh impersonation. But what most of all is lacking in Stannard's account is the intensity of Waugh's self-hatred and sense of sin — for whatever his judgment on the society surrounding him, his judgment on himself was plainly of the blackest. *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* is sometimes misunderstood, as it was by J. B. Priestley when he interpreted Pinfold's voices as showing him up as a "fake" (they represented "the fundamental self telling the ego not to be a mountebank"). This can hardly be the point, for the accusations that the voices bring — that Pinfold is really the Jew profiteer "Pinfeld", a shoe-fetishist, a "common little communist pansy" — are patently ludicrous, and even the victim Pinfold reflects, wonderingly, that if they had really wanted to crucify him they could have done better than that. What the voices are, rather (not too unlike the voices in Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*), is the incarnation of Pinfold's own temptations. They are Pinfold/Waugh asking himself, "Can I be the appalling sort of person who itches to call people communist pansies, would like to have people at his mercy and bully or torture them, and enjoys salacious sentimental fantasies about his own daughter's sex-life?" ("Treat her husband . . ."). This is a *malaise* (adversary "voices") which many of us suffer occasionally in a milder form, but only Waugh has managed to get it down clearly on paper, and it continues to amaze one that he could handle it with success so comely.

Stannard's hook, it must be said, suffers a little from his hit-or-miss aim with words. He writes "equable" when he means "equitable", "despoiled" when he means "spoiled", "befriended" when he means "became friendly with". Further, he continually uses the word "mystical" as a synonym both for "religious" and for "superstitious" — a very misleading habit in a book about Waugh, whose religion, according to his own account as well as Father Martin D'Arcy's, could hardly have been less mystical.

Though there is a lot that is rewarding in Stannard's book, as there was in Christopher Sykes's, this extraordinary, unnerving man Waugh has still to find his ideal biographer — in which he resembles W. H. Auden, whose life, which has the same powerful hold over our imagination, shows an odd antithetical symmetry with, and even affinity to, Waugh's. The ever-observant Martin Green points out that "as late as *Letters from Iceland* (1937) he [Auden] . . . said that he would like to write like Firbank, Beatrix Potter, Carroll and Lear, just the authors Waugh might have cited".



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## Party turns

Peter Clarke

**HAROLD WILSON**  
*Memories 1916-1964: The making of a Prime Minister*  
 214pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson/Michael Joseph. £14.95.  
 07181 27757

**ROBERT KILROY-SILK**  
*Hard Labour: The political diary of Robert Kilroy-Silk*  
 176pp. Chatto and Windus. £9.95.  
 07011 3092X

**MICHAEL CRICK**  
*The March of Militant*  
 346pp. Faber. Paperback. £4.95.  
 0571 46430

Imagine a rising Labour MP, barely thirty, in his first parliament after election for the Merseyside constituency of Ormskirk, with a brief academic career now behind him but still mindful of his humble origins, and with his sights already set upon the leadership of his party. This indeed is the early story of both Harold Wilson and Robert Kilroy-Silk. But then they diverge: Kilroy-Silk, after once in a television interview, which his friends always remembered and his enemies never forgot, having declared his ambition to become Prime Minister, has now left politics for television; whereas Harold Wilson stayed the course.

Like his hero Churchill, Wilson has published a closely documented account of his years in high office, which he now supplements, as with *My Early Life*, by a more relaxed and anecdotal set of *Memories 1916-1964*. Wilson's tenacity, of course, is fabled and legendary. He adds to the legend with the story of a crucial parliamentary exchange on the eve of the election for the Labour Party leadership in 1963. Macmillan had produced a quotation from the recently deceased Hugh Gaitskell, challenging Wilson to say whether he agreed with it. His effortless riposte - "I was completely relaxed" - was to draw the Prime Minister's attention to an alternative passage, "which I told him he would find on a particular page of the published version of Hugh Gaitskell's speeches". Unfortunately, the author also adds to the fables by imprudently relying upon that memory for much of the material in his book.

There is, for example, a paragraph on the by-election which occurred while Wilson was a young don at Oxford. We are told that it took place for one of the University seats (in fact, the City in 1939 (in fact, 1938) on the elevation of Sir Arthur Salter to the House of Lords (which did not happen until 1953). "That great entertainer A. P. Herbert" (in fact, A. D. Lindsay, Master of Balliol) is held to have defeated Quintin Hogg (who actually won), while the Labour candidate, Frank Pakenham (in fact, Patrick Gordon Walker) resisted pressure to stand down (in fact, Labour withdrew). This sort of thing is not very encouraging when it comes to deciding how far Wilson's accuracy can be relied upon in other matters where he is our only witness. There is admittedly an abrupt switch to precision when Wilson comes to his period as a civil servant during the Second World War.

He emerges unrepentant as a political broker and fixer. Already in 1942 he was advising a High Court judge how to settle a pay dispute in the coalfields. Since the miners' union was asking for four shillings, a proposal for two shillings was the one thing to avoid. "It ought to look as if we had reasons for our recommendations. What about 2/6d?" Wilson saw how the "half-crown" could be dramatized, with honour to all. He seems to have had more luck on this occasion than in later years when he tried to educate Gaitskell in politics.

The portrait of Gaitskell is in many ways tinged with admiration but there was a clear difference of temperament between the two men, for all their common background as academic economists. Wilson reports telling Gaitskell during a taxi ride at the same time as the rearmament crisis of 1951, "right, if you will agree to our doing so-and-so, we are not going to object when you do something else".

The account of the author's subsequent resignation on this very issue of rearmament, simultaneously with Aneurin Bevan's resignation over health service charges, is one of the best things in his book. What with Gaitskell's intransigence, Bevan's impetuosity, Morrison's deviousness and Attlee's tactfulness, the young President of the Board of Trade was at his wits' end how to solve an unnecessary quarrel and keep the Cabinet intact. He may not have a good word to say for Morrison, but he has a *bon mot* for him instead, calling him "not so much disloyal, as watching for a favourable opportunity to be disloyal". When Wilson accompanied Bevan to see the arch-loyalist Ernest Bevin, he knew how to play his cards: "Nye's destruction, I quietly suggested, was being supported if not indeed masterminded, by Morrison. That was enough." With Bevin now ready to activate Attlee, the author implies, a settlement was within reach - only to be snatched away by Bevin's death two days later. As it turned out, therefore, Wilson's resignation branded him as a Bevanite, and thus established his reputation as a man of the left. That he was no such animal is something he does not dissimulate. The Bevanites, he maintains, were more of a social clique, "enjoying each others' company", than an ideological faction.

Wilson's considerable success in working with Gaitskell in the 1950s showed him seeking the middle ground in the party, always ready to 'settle for half a loaf or half-a-crown'. He compares politics to rowing - "the ideal solution is to get the boat along as quickly as possible without turning it over". Hence, he claims, his breach with Gaitskell in 1960-61. Wilson was ready to swallow the dogmatic affirmation of Clause IV in the confidence that it would be tempered by pragmatic application. Why upset the faithful by questioning the realism of the Sermon on the Mount? "What Hugh Gaitskell

never recognised", Wilson concludes, "was that, from the Party's earliest days, a great number of converts had joined Labour because they believed that socialism was a way of making a reality of Christian principles in everyday life." The road from the Huddersfield Congregational church to Downing Street was paved with composed resolutions.

Robert Kilroy-Silk has published, in *Hard Labour*, a diary of his battle for reselection in the Knowsley North constituency, formed from part of the old Ormskirk division which he had previously held. The diary runs from September 25 to November 27, 1985, and gives, as the blurb claims, "a blow-by-blow account" of his activities. On October 2, at the Labour Party conference in Bournemouth, he had an altercation with a Militant supporter - "I hit him first. Just a left" - which sent the man through a hotel window. Mrs Kilroy-Silk, we are told, "was mortified when I told her what had happened. Not at what I'd done, but because she'd missed it." Luckily there was time to mollify the manager before setting out on a crowded evening of hot gossip, punctuated at intervals - "after the *Daily Mirror* party and before the Channel 4 reception" - by hotter rumours from friendly journalists. Back at home, the pace is no less frenetic. He complains, "I never seem to be off the telephone", except, of course, to go on the television. He is engagingly frank about his "visions of banner headlines", especially when they are disappointed. When a rumour that he had been deselected got around, several fellow MPs quietly commiserated with him. "It was annoying", he notes, "it showed me how small a ripple the news had caused."

One complaint against Kilroy-Silk was that he had forsaken the deprived council estates of Kirkby for a beautiful house in Buckinghamshire. This charge rankles with him. "Whatever I've got I've worked for and earned, like the good working-class lad that I am." His credentials in this respect are lovingly buffed in a series of interjections about Liverpool's football results. "That's terrible", he comments on one defeat. "I hate us losing to anyone, but especially to southern, and in particular London teams." The entry for November 16 is quite a contest between Terry Wogan coming for dinner in his Rolls-Royce and Liverpool beating West Bromwich, leaving no space for the dreary events in Knowsley North. His declaration three days later, that "I do not feel any affinity for the SDP", will come as a relief to many people, not all of them in the Labour Party.

This record, then, is not narrowly conceived as an attempt to correct the minutes of meetings in smoke-filled rooms. "I'd forgotten how powerful a writer Mailer is", the author reflects at one point. "Why can't I write like he does?" That such aspirations flicker within his breast is evident from the form of several entries, with their arresting catch-lines and their snappy dialogue. Sometimes it seems too good to be true. The story line is laid out so adroitly, with careful attention to episodes which only subsequently assume full significance, that one

marvels at the clever editing necessary to produce such effects and wonders whether it deserved some acknowledgement.

The rise of Militant on Merseyside is the ostensible focus of Kilroy-Silk's story. He prints some revealing passages, naturally of a subjective nature, exhibiting a propensity to equate personal hostility to himself with constitutional malpractice. At an organizational level, everything turned on the number of delegates entitled to vote in the Knowsley North management committee. It is clear that Militant was largely responsible for a sudden increase in the committee's size, from around eighty, chiefly comprising ward delegates, to around 140, notably augmented by union delegates, especially from the Transport and General Workers' Union. When the responsible official of the TGWU sought to fend off challenges to his delegates' credentials by attempting to regularize the situation instead of immediately reducing the delegation, the scales fell from Kilroy-Silk's eyes. On the telephone again, he remonstrated with party officials: "the fact that he's trying to show he's not playing by the rules, that he's not on my side, doesn't it?"

In the end Kilroy-Silk was open to the same taint as many a defector to the SDP: that he was a machine politician whose machine had broken down. His diary records his frustration as he kept trying to kick it into life again. The practices he describes were, of course, deep-rooted in Labour politics in Liverpool, as is made clear in the new chapters which Michael Crik has added to his well-documented study, *The March of Militant* (the original edition of which was reviewed, as *Militant*, in the TLS of June 22, 1984). In the days of the Braddocks, had been the Catholic right who were in control. What Militant did was to make the system work for the left. One of their right-wing opponents described how Militant councillors would go through the agenda on a Friday night to decide their line, carry the broad left group in support on a Sunday morning, and use this majority to commit the caucus of the Labour group on a Monday evening. Thus the ruling Labour group of fifty-one councillors in 1983 might have contained no more than sixteen Militant councillors but was none the less under Militant control so long as the conventions of the caucus and the block vote held firm. The District Labour Party, where delegates from the TGWU and General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union numbered those from the ward parties, became a further bastion of Militant support.

The faceless men of the caucus, however, were not the whole story in Liverpool in the days as the Militant flagships. Up on the bridge as deputy leader of the council, Derek Hall had nothing if not a public face, projected through insidious cultivation of the media. With his expensive suits and expensive hair, personified in a new breed - the red under the sunbed. He was a worthy opponent for Kilroy-Silk, both of them a world away from the baggy-suited, pipe-sucking Nonconformist pieties of Wilsonian Labourism.

and on the quality of local recruits but that being farthest to the left does not automatically mean being the best organized. The specificity of the Ceres lies - or lay - in its political choices.

For Chevenement and his followers the union of the left was not, as it was for Mitterrand, a tactical ploy but the historic re-uniting of the two branches of the working-class movement. This would be able subsequently to take possession of the state in order to bring about a decisive shift of power towards the working class and also to mobilize France against the hegemony of Anglo-Saxon capitalism. Hanley understands but may underemphasize the contradiction between a Marxist stress on class and a Jacobin Republican stress on the nation. The latter led the Ceres to defend France's nuclear deterrent and to tug the PS towards what might be termed a Gaullist orthodoxy on security policy.

The Ceres's prickly nationalism has always separated it from the unilateralism of the Tribune or the Bennite left as well as from the more or less dependent left wing of the

German Social Democrats. Indeed the subtitle's description of this book as "A contribution to the study of factionalism in political parties" is an understandable but unconvincing attempt by author or publisher to broaden the appeal of a work which correctly attributes great importance to French political culture.

It is now incumbent on Hanley to update his research since he is not able in *Keeping Left* to analyse the years 1983 to 1986, although he has seen major changes in the Ceres. To the despair of his advocate one might argue that the decline and the wilful stupidity of the Communist Party have destroyed the myth of left-wing unity and have deprived the Ceres of its raison d'être. Defeated on economic policy in 1983 by a PS leadership which gave priority to deflation and industrial restructuring, Chevenement has been stressing the "Renouveau" aspects of his thought and as Minister of Education from 1984 to 1986 he won support from people who had no sympathy for socialism. The question-mark in Hanley's title is placed.



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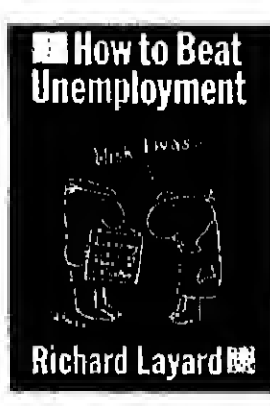
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# Warrant for genocide

Ian Kershaw

EBERHARD JACKEL and JÜRGEN ROHWER (Editors)  
*Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg*  
 252pp. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.  
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 3421 062552  
 CHRISTOPHER R. BROWNING  
*Fateful Months: Essays on the emergence of the Final Solution*  
 111pp. Holmes and Meier.  
 08419 09679  
 (ERBERT and SYBILLE ODENAU (Editors)  
 'Schreiben wie es wirklich war':  
 Aufzeichnungen Karl Dürckfeldens aus den  
 Jahren 1933-1945  
 136pp. Hannover: Fackelträger. DM9.80.  
 J 7716 23111

The role of Hitler in the decision-making process which led to the "Final Solution" has become a highly contentious issue. According to one challenging interpretation, while Hitler was indispensable as the inspiration and legitimation of the destruction of the Jews, and while his approval and moral responsibility are not in question, no specific action, decision, or order by the Führer was needed to begin the Final Solution. Rather, the systematic physical annihilation of the Jews emerged as the culmination of a gradually unfolding series of initially localized killings in late 1941 and early 1942.

The question of whether a specific "Führer Order" was given, or whether a system-induced process of escalating radicalization sufficed, was a theme which permeated a major international conference held in Stuttgart in 1984, whose proceedings are made available in *Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. But the complexities and insufficiencies of the available evidence mean that some crucial links in the chain of destruction will never be fitted together with total certainty.

However, the conference did clarify a number of important issues. A relatively high level of consensus emerged on the following points: that the orders given to the *Einsatzgruppen* in the spring of 1941 marked a decisive and irreversible step which led to an outright genocidal policy, even if the evidently loosely framed instructions were clarified (and radicalized) only in mid-summer; that central direction was plainly visible from the start, though much scope was left to local initiatives to force the pace; that the whole development was unthinkable without some sort of order by Hitler, though this may have been no more than a signal to Himmler and Heydrich rather than a specific and unequivocal command; that the decision to extend the extermination programme to the whole of European, not just Russian, Jewry must have been taken by the end of July 1941 at the latest – that is, in contrast to some influential recent interpretations, at a time of presumed imminent victory in the war rather than in the face of failure of the Eastern campaign; and that, despite overlapping and confused developments between mid-1941 and spring 1942, the basic contours of the annihilation programme were already taking clear shape by October 1941.

This outline of developments comes very close to that which Christopher Browning, himself a participant in the Stuttgart conference, had already developed in an important article published in 1981. He extends his analysis in the first of four sombre essays which make up his new slim, but important, volume, *Fateful Months*. Browning's detailed exploration of the difficult evidence is admirably conducted, his judgment sound and balanced, his argument compelling. The only doubt about the scenario he depicts concerns his insistence upon the need for Hitler's final approval of a formulated "destruction plan" in or around October 1941. A blanket sanctioning by Hitler earlier in the summer would surely have sufficed. The rest could have been left to Himmler, Heydrich and their minions. Other than

this, Browning's masterly account seems as close as we are likely to come to an authoritative assessment of the steps which sealed the death of millions.

His other essays provide detailed and chilling analyses of three separate aspects of the gathering momentum for the physical destruction of the Jews between the summer of 1941 and the spring of 1942: the mass shootings of the male Jews of Serbia in autumn 1941, carried out not by the SS but by the Wehrmacht as reprisals for partisan activity; the development of the gas-van in the autumn of 1941 as an experimental and interim method of annihilation; and the application of such a gas-van by the Nazi authorities in Belgrade to carry out the systematic murder, between March and May 1942, of the remaining Jewish women and children in Serbia. A strong feature of the essays is Browning's concentration on the small cogs in the wheels of the killing process – men such as the motor mechanics who converted vehicles into murder machines and serviced them, showing irritation only when receiving complaints about the technical malfunctioning of the vans. The essays illustrate vividly how the Final Solution "emerged out of a series of decisions and initiatives made not only by Hitler but also by numerous 'little men' eager to do 'more than their duty'".

How much did the German people know about and comprehend the horrific events unfolding in Eastern Europe? Answers can only remain speculative, though there is certainly sufficient evidence to dispose of the frequently heard apologia that no one had been aware of what was happening to the Jews. One indication of the information open to those interested in acquiring it, and of the conclusions which had to be drawn from such information, is provided by some remarkable "diary notes"

kept by Karl Dürckfelden, son of a worker in the Celle district of Lower Saxony, who himself later became a skilled technician and engineer. Dürckfelden, who, though he had never been politically active, had sympathized with the SPD and retained a critical distaste for the Nazi régime, did not keep a daily diary, but wrote up reviews of events from time to time based upon his own notes and observations. The well-edited extracts cover the time of Hitler's take-over of power, the events of the anti-Jewish pogrom of November 1938 and, most importantly, the period which coincided with the implementation of the Final Solution between 1941 and 1943. During the latter period, Dürckfelden heard of the deportation of the Jews of Holland from a conversation with a Dutch lorry driver in July 1942. A few months later he recorded the news of deportations of French Jews which he had heard from the BBC. From a soldier who had formerly worked in his firm, he learnt of the shooting and gassing of Jews in Poland. His brother-in-law gave him a graphic description of the shooting of Jews near Kiev. Asked if he had seen it himself, his informant told Dürckfelden that he had stood only twenty metres away. He spoke further of the mass burial of 50,000 Jews, and on a further trip home from the front declared that there were no Jews left in the Ukraine: they "were now all dead".

It would be comforting to think of the genocide against the Jews as a unique set of events attributable to the ideological paranoia of Hitler and the Nazi leadership. But Browning's "little men" keen to do "more than their duty", and the millions of ordinary citizens who were less anxious to seek out the truth than Karl Dürckfelden, point towards a message which contains little such comfort, for Germans and non-Germans alike.

## Facing up to the past

A. J. Nicholls

RICHARD VON WEIZSÄCKER  
*A Voice from Germany: Speeches by Richard von Weizsäcker*  
 112pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.  
 0297 789252

On May 8, 1985, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Richard von Weizsäcker, spoke in the Bundestag in Bonn to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Hitler's defeat in the Second World War. He faced a difficult and delicate task. The Western Allies had bungled their treatment of the anniversary, wavering uneasily between remembrance of common Allied sacrifices in the struggle to liberate Europe from Nazi tyranny and a desire to score Cold War points off the Soviet Union, which was exploiting the occasion for its own propaganda purposes. The damaging ambivalence of this position was shown up by President Reagan's visit to the Bitburg cemetery in West Germany, because it seemed that he was honouring Nazi war dead rather than those who had fallen in the fight against Hitler. Criticism of this visit in other Allied countries, together with sensitivity about Germany's role in the anniversary, aroused a mildly nationalist backlash in the Federal Republic. One conservative newspaper even published an article claiming that 1945 had been a disastrous defeat for the democracies, and blaming President Roosevelt for allowing the Soviet Union to dominate 100 million East Europeans after the war.

It was in this tense atmosphere that Richard von Weizsäcker made one of the most striking public statements ever uttered by a German President. His speech combined true patriotism with a capacity to face up to the unpleasantness of Germany's Nazi past. Quite properly, he denied the validity of collective guilt – "there is no such thing as the guilt or innocence of an entire people". On the other hand he reminded his listeners that individuals were responsible for their actions, and urged those who had lived through the period to ask themselves privately about their own involvement. He celebrated May 8, 1945, as a day of German liberation from Nazi tyranny, but was at pains to commemorate the victims of the Nazi war including six million Jews, an "un-

thinkable number" of Russians and Poles, the homosexuals and the mentally sick, the hostages and the resistance fighters. When taking a hard look at German behaviour towards the Jews in the Third Reich he pointed out that it was not a matter of "overcoming" the past, since that was impossible. "The past does not allow itself to be retrospectively altered or undone. But whoever closes his eyes to the past becomes blind to the present. Whoever does not wish to remember inhumanity becomes susceptible to the dangers of a new infection." His message was one of atonement and reconciliation coupled with a sincere pride in his nation, a nation whose true character had never been that of the Nazis, however strongly they claimed to embody German nationalism.

The speech itself made an immediate impact both inside and outside the Federal Republic. It helped to smooth ruffled feathers on both sides of the Atlantic, damping down a long-standing anti-Americanism in Germany and restoring Bonn's reputation in the Western alliance. Even more important, a blow had been struck for decency and honour in an era characterized by pessimism. This was neither the first nor the last time that President von Weizsäcker has spoken with vigour and clarity on controversial issues. His views deserve to be read, outside Germany and one therefore welcomes the collection of his speeches translated under the title *A Voice from Germany*, even if the translation itself is not always inspired. Weizsäcker distinguishes very clearly between true and false patriotism, between a sane and rational love of one's country and jingo nationalism.

Weizsäcker himself speaks to Europe and would never dream of preaching to foreigners. Some of us, however, may be allowed to hope that other civilized nations can be persuaded to face up to their own past to the extent that the West Germans – informed as they have been by an admirably brave and scrupulous historical profession – have been able to do.

*Against the Apocalypse* by David G. Rosen (374pp. Harvard University Press. £8.50, 0916 9). First published in 1984 and now reissued in paperback, contains a refulgent account of the Holocaust as an apocalyptic event. Rosen avers that the catastrophe should be seen in the context of generations of Jewish persecution and pogroms.

## By wheat and by meat

David Lehmann

DAVID ROCK  
*Argentina 1916-1982: From Spanish colonization to the Falklands War*  
 478pp. Tauris. £24.50.  
 1850430136

David Rock has placed many people in his debt. His book will be an indispensable reference, an encyclopaedia of Argentine history and historiography, to be plundered as much as read by anyone needing to know something about the country's political past. *Argentina 1916-1982* does not read like an encyclopaedia; the first four of the eight chapters can become somewhat tedious, as they lurch from one *peripeteia* to the next, but once Rock has reached the period he knows best, and feels most in command of, namely that starting in 1890, the story reads well, almost nicely. [This despite the surprisingly large number of malapropisms and hispanisms – "factiousness" for "factiousness", "pandemic ballot-rigging", and "humble" for "poor", among others.]

But if Rock has provided us with an invaluable reference work, has he also provided us with a story worth telling or hearing? In choosing to perform this public service – of placing between two covers a synthesis of a quarter-century of historical research on one apparently remote country – Rock has been forced back on to two basic ideas: first, that in Argentina history repeats itself, and second, that it is in the colonial origins, the colonial economy, the colonial spatial distribution of its settlements and the colonial character of its culture that an explanation of the country's contemporary woes can be found. The explanation of the outcome by the origins, however remote, is an inevitable, though disappointing, corollary of the method Rock has adopted.

Essentially, the country's history can be divided into two periods, separated not by Independence from Spain, but by the massive im-

migration at the end of the nineteenth century by which the country was transformed beyond recognition – indeed, it remained the same "country" only in its frontiers and, significantly, its political and legal institutions. Population multiplied three times between 1857 and 1890, when it reached 3.3 million; between 1871 and 1914 3.1 million permanent immigrants arrived, plus another 2.8 million who returned home to Europe, or moved on to other countries in the Americas. It was common for seasonal workers from Europe to return home after the harvest. Overnight, so to speak, Argentina became an urban society with a majority of European-born inhabitants.

It has long been fashionable, especially among those seeking a conservative answer to the question "What went wrong?", to compare Argentina with Australia, on the assumption that the difference between these two sparsely populated (at least after the indigenous populations had been wiped out), wheat-exporting countries would be explained by some institutional trick which the latter found but which eluded the former. Brazil would have been a more relevant comparison, with its background of Iberian colonization and its massive influx of migrants at the same period. The contrasts are striking, all the more so an account of the similarities: both countries had a hinterland dominated by mafia-like political networks; both were export-oriented; both had authoritarian populist régimes in the period between 1930 and 1950. Yet Brazil rapidly overtook its neighbour in political stability and economic growth, unhindered by its even more unequal distribution of income and perhaps helped by an infinitely more submissive peasantry and proletariat. The Brazilian military have not been as cruel as their Argentine confrères, but then they have never faced such serious threats.

Rock's notion of the "colonial" situation of Argentina – fortuitous affinities with the "left Peronist" interpretation notwithstanding – is thus very crude: an exporter of primary com-

modities it may have been and may remain, but its exports are of goods which the mass of the people eat, and not only in good times, namely wheat and beef; and they are also of goods produced without reliance on an underemployed rural semi-proletariat, as is usually the case in colonial situations. Indeed, there is scarcely a "colonial" peasantry in Argentina such as one finds in the Andean countries, in the north-east of Brazil or in Central America. These circumstances have produced particular tensions which, combined with a strong working class, have made the economy extraordinarily difficult to manage: export booms have been directly inflationary because the internal market competes with the external, driving up food prices; spurts of growth have run straight into labour shortages due to the lack of a reserve army of labour; domestic industry has remained heavily dependent on imported capital and intermediate goods despite import substitution in the 1940s and 1950s, so that when, as usually occurs, a devaluing currency combines with an export boom in wheat or meat, local industrialists are caught between rising wage-costs and rising costs of inputs. In Brazil, say, or Chile, an export boom does bring at least an opportunity to take advantage of relatively cheap labour.

Perhaps Argentina can be best described as a non-colonial society which is nevertheless stuck in the "Third World" because it has never solved fundamental political problems. Rock's recourse to colonialism as an explanation of "what went wrong" might be more plausible in Peru, or Central America, or much of Africa. But in Argentina the most important fact is that no political force has ever attempted to create a powerful state apparatus, centralized, bureaucratic and autonomous, which could control, canalize, and ultimately resolve the virulent social conflicts to which these conditions made it prone. As a result, electoral politics have led to episodes in which those in power set about disembowelling the state politically, leaving the apparatus powerless and

bereft of legitimacy.

The sociological discontinuity marked by immigration stands in contrast to political continuity. The contemporary state is heir to an apparatus which has never undergone a substantial quantitative or qualitative revision, which ever since the early nineteenth century had been subject to persistent centrifugal pressures. Perón's legacy to his country after his first government (1942-56) was a trade-union movement which was unbeatable in achieving the objectives of its leaders but was hardly a basis for enabling the country's principal political forces to coexist. Curiously, for a person of evidently authoritarian bent, Perón's main legacy was a congeries of organizations which, in power and out, weakened the state.

In the second Peronist government (1973-6) the effects of this became positively murderous as the class war was introjected both by the Peronist movement and by the state itself: the Montonero youth-wing against the trade-union bosses, the bosses against management, and the dark forces of terror and red revolution, all using state institutions – police and army, of course, but also the ministries – in their struggles. And likewise the military, whose numerous factions started out using individual institutions, who then laid dead bodies on each others' doorsteps, and who finally went under after sacrificing hundreds of dead and the self-respect of an entire population in the Falklands War.

*In Colonial Catholicism: A parish history of Guatemala 1524-1821* Adrian C. van Oss has drawn on numerous unpublished sources to examine in detail the evolution of the parishes of a single representative Central American diocese during the period of Spanish colonial rule. The book is arranged in six chapters: "Parochial origins", "Parish structure", "Parish finance: The tithe and its alternatives", "The village church", "Secularization of the regular parishes and attempts of Hispanization" and "The parish clergy".

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## For lending and for locals

Anthony Hobson

J. C. T. OATES  
**Cambridge University Library: A history: From the beginnings to the Copyright Act of Queen Anne**  
 510pp. Cambridge University Press. £50.  
 0521306566

England suffered a Cultural Revolution in the mid-sixteenth century quite as violent and destructive as the Marxist one. Four out of five successive Chancellors of Cambridge University were beheaded and the fifth imprisoned. The traditional curriculum of both universities was banned and new subjects for study prescribed by royal injunction. The effect on both book collections was far-reaching, but whereas at Cambridge the Library survived, at Oxford the books from Duke Humfrey's Library were dispersed and its furniture sold, leaving nothing but a "great desolate room".

J. C. T. Oates derives some satisfaction from this contrast, but does not, in *Cambridge University Library: A History: From the beginnings to the Copyright Act of Queen Anne*, entirely explain it. If the Cambridge Library had secret protectors they were careful to cover their tracks and no document exists to identify them. Perhaps it was only through the chance of being housed in two rooms instead of one that Cambridge fared better than Oxford. The "common library" had been built between 1458 and 1471, replacing an earlier room, with funds derived from the fines levied on monks and abbots for neglect of their obligation to entertain the regents to dinner. About 1471 Thomas Rotherham financed the construction of a new library, at right angles to the earlier one, and endowed it with books and manuscripts. Access to Rotherham's library, where the more precious volumes were kept, was more restricted than to the other room, an arrangement comparable to the division of the contemporary Vatican Library into Public and

Secret. To the basic holdings of religion, theology, philosophy and canon law, with small sections of grammar and medicine, Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, added in 1529 three Greek manuscripts and the *editiones principes*, from Italian presses, of most of the Greek classics.

This injection of the New Learning did not help to preserve the collections during the religious upheavals. The Library indeed survived, but with holdings reduced by two-thirds and its prestige so much diminished that the Regius Professor of Greek and the Public Orator felt justified in appropriating Tunstall's Greek manuscripts. The common library was stripped of books and turned into a lecture room, while the illuminated manuscripts in Rotherham's library, exposed to the maraudings of vandals and zealots, were "very rare cut and mangled for the lymned letters and pictures": a sad instance of the unwisdom of embracing changes in educational fashion too enthusiastically.

Andrew Perne, Master of Peterhouse, rescued the collection from forty years of pillage and neglect. Matthew Parker and other benefactors were solicited for gifts, and by 1574 435 volumes were available for consultation in Rotherham's library. Cambridge was thus twenty-eight years in advance of Oxford in reviving its university collection.

Other gifts followed, among them the Codex Bezae, a fifth-century Greek manuscript of the Gospels and Acts presented by the Geneva reformer, Theodore de Bèze; and by about 1625, the Library having meanwhile expanded again into the old common library room, the need was felt for a new building. But hopes that the Duke of Buckingham would pay for it were frustrated by his assassination. Cambridge had to wait until 1934 for its entire collection to be rehoused, though the widowed Duchess of Buckingham was persuaded to give the University the oriental manuscripts of a Leyden professor, Thomas Erpenius, which her husband had bought while on a mission to the States General.

A curious incident occurred during the Civil War. Parliament, having voted to abolish episcopacy, allotted the Archbishop of Canterbury's library at Lambeth, consisting of about 10,000 volumes, to Cambridge. They filled the old common library, shelved in double-sided cases paid for by a London alderman, Sir John Wollaston. The books had to be returned to Lambeth after the Restoration, but the University was fortunate to receive in their place the equally large collection of Richard Holdsworth, a former Master of Emmanuel College excluded and imprisoned for his royalist opinions. This transaction gave rise in Germany to a widespread belief that Cromwell had tried to sell the University Library to Asiatic Jews. It was not until 1715, when George I bought and presented Bishop Moore's great library, that Cambridge's Whig sympathies obtained their reward.

More gifts and bequests, both of books and money, came in during the second half of the century, works on science were purchased and the early Licensing Acts set in motion the creaking mechanism of copyright deposit. This mildly increased rhythm of operation proved too hectic for books in charge. Oates categorizes Isaac Dobson's "eight-year excursion into librarianship" (1659-67) as "simply an ill-judged aberration in a life of otherwise exemplary inactivity", and the accumulation of confusion during his stewardship took decades to overcome.

Nevertheless, by 1709, holdings stood at 15,639 volumes and 658 manuscripts. At one time there had been aspirations to rival the sister university, "If Fishes thus do bring us Books, then we / May hope to equal Bodley's Library" was the comment when a volume of tracts was found inside a cod in the Cambridge market. These hopes had faded. The University Library's holdings did not figure in Edward Bernard's union catalogue of manuscripts in English libraries. The reason, according to Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London and editor of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, was that "They'll consider what an inconsiderable figure theirs will make compared with Oxford".

It was not only in size that the two libraries differed. Sir Thomas Bodley's foundation was to be open to all "gentlemen scholars"; the Cambridge Library was conceived more narrowly as a service to the University. The 1582 Statutes restricted access to resident Masters of Arts and Bachelors of Law or Physic. It was nearly a century before the right of access was extended even to non-resident MAs. Meanwhile charges had begun to be levied for admission. Readers whose colleges did not subscribe to library funds had to pay 3s. In practice the rules were often relaxed. Oates gives several examples of manuscripts lent to non-Cambridge editors, often for years at a time. Humfrey Wanley, when cataloguing Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, found "the Cambridge Gentlemen . . . extremely courteous and obliging". Cases of disappointment were rare, though Rudolf Erich Raspe, the author of *Baron Munchausen*, castigated the curatorial staff as "literary eunuchs" for refusing him facilities to transcribe a medieval text.

The regular borrowing of books started as early as 1513. Here was another difference between the two universities, accurately summarized by Wanley: "All the Libraries in Oxford are *Studying Libraries*; and those of Cambridge . . . are *Lending Libraries*." The distinction between the two functions is a real one, which recent events suggest the British Library has failed to understand.

With one exception the early Librarians were either too preoccupied with other business or were themselves too colourless to leave their mark on the collections. Until 1570 the care of the books was entrusted to the University Chaplain. The first Library Keeper, appointed in 1577, resigned because the University could not find the money to pay his salary of £10 a year. One of his successors was unable to write his name and signed documents laboriously with initials. The first scholar to hold the office, and the outstanding personality in the seventeenth-century Library, was Abraham Wheelock. He was also the University's first lecturer in Arabic and the first in Anglo-Saxon; and his energy and reputation for learning, besides attracting many gifts, no doubt influenced Parliament's choice of Cambridge for the British Library.

The collection depended for accession almost exclusively on gifts and bequests. Purchases were few, though Minshew's *Guide into Tongues* was bought in 1617. In 1648 Parliament presented a group of Hebrew books and, by a forerunner of the University Grants Committee system, proposed a grant of £2,000 to be raised from lands belonging to cathedral chapters. The Library did not enjoy a regular income, making possible the acquisition of multi-volume sets and standard works of scholarship, until after the Restoration, when Toby Rustat endowed it with a capital sum of £1,000.

On a framework of facts extracted from the University's records of its official decisions (known as "Graces") Oates has woven a narrative of extraordinary fascination and charm. No reference to the Library seems to have escaped him and a note that he has "resisted the temptation" to consult the original *Calendar of the Proceedings in Chancery* is the sole example of such restraint. The characters and careers of the chief figures in his history are vividly sketched. They form a varied cast, from Perne, who survived the religious changes of the mid-sixteenth century but in doing so inspired a new verb *Perne*, "I perne, I eat, I change often", and Wheelock, of whom it was said that he was "able to be the Interpreter general not only for the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, or of the Wise Men to Herod, but to Mankind", to Rustat, the amiable Cavalier and devoted attendant of Charles II in exile, who once posted across Europe to bring the king a clean suit of clothes.

One of Oates's many merits is the ability to explain concisely the significance of the principal books and manuscripts entering the Library. Besides telling us what benefactors gave, he is often able, by detective work of a high standard, to say where their books had been obtained from. He describes the scholarly use made of manuscripts, and does not conceal the faults, or even misdeeds, of individual scholars: men such as the Dutch editor of Macrobius who fabricated readings as an excuse for ingenious commentary, or Edward Llyud who snipped off the margins bearing Welsh glosses from a ninth-century *Yfyrddu*. Oates writes epigrammatically, with wit and elegance, as my quotations will have shown. He is an authority on Sterne, but some of his comments have more than a flavour of Gibbon, as when he remarks that James Duport's *Threulothambos* "enabled those who were so minded to read the book of John Homeric verse", or that Perne "kept intact his honours and dignities (though, some thought, at the cost of dignity and honour)".

One or two minor details can be questioned. Angelo Colocci was not a learned printer, but a collector who installed a Greek press in his house on the Quirinale; "Polyglott" and "Hexaglott" are unconventional spellings more could be said about the Nikolovs who copied one of Tunstall's Greek manuscripts. But it would be altogether wrong to end with these cavils. With his erudition, his wit and sense of style, Oates has set an unattainable standard for future library historians. His book is far more than a chronicle. It illuminates the changing interests of scholarship and the changing attitudes towards libraries. Its continuation, by David McKitterick, will no doubt chart the rise in public esteem for these civilized institutions to the high point that preceded the present trough.

J. B. Oldham was Cambridge University's Sanders Reader in Bibliography for 1949-50; for his work on, particularly, English blind-stamped bindings his name is authoritative to all concerned with ancient libraries. M. L. Charlesworth's succinct biography, *J. B. Oldham 1882-1962* (97pp. Available from the author, 15 Ashton Road, Shrewsbury SY3 7AP. £5. 0 9511357 0 B) reveals, however, an eccentric character and career of interest to others than students of bibliography at former members of Shrewsbury School. Educated at 1911 (financing and planning the house himself), but an emotional and professional disaster obliged him, at fifty, to resign both his house and teaching. Yet this released his energies and aesthetic sensibility to the point that brought him in 1960 the Gold Medal of the Bibliographical Society.

## Monodies of deprivation

Brian Case

WILFRID MELLERS  
*Angels of the Night: Popular female singers of our time*  
 277pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £15.  
 063146962  
 ROBYN ARCHER and DIANA SIMMONDS  
*A Star is Torn*  
 208pp. Virago. £7.95.  
 036065144

A journalist once asked Chuck Berry, the most influential artist in the history of rock and roll, whether he ever got carried away during his stage performances. "Not enough to mistake five minutes for seven", came the reply. Happily for the authors here, Berry, being male, falls outside their brief, since both books place a heavy premium upon spontaneity and vulnerability as the litmus test of true art. Wilfrid Mellers's heroines run from the off-circuit primitive Alabama gospel singer, Vera Hall, to the highly troubling contemporary performance artist, Laurie Anderson, as the author evaluates the place of personal testimony in the fields of gospel, blues, jazz, country, soul, folk, rock and pop. Robyn Archer and Diana Simmonds's book developed out of the former's one-woman stage show, and hews to the feminist thesis that its collection of singers and actresses, from Maude Lloyd to Janis Joplin and from Frances Farmer to Marilyn Monroe, were martyrs to an uncaring capitalist patriarchy. The books overlap in the cases of Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington and Janis Joplin, but the interpretations serve different ends.

## Across the boards

George Rowell

KURT GANZL  
*The British Musical Theatre*  
 Volume One: 1865-1914; Volume Two: 1915-1984  
 1,960pp and 1,258pp. Macmillan. £60 each  
 (£100 the set)  
 033339839 4 and 033339744 4

The literature of entertainment is usually lavish in illustration but sparing with statistics. The two monumental volumes of *The British Musical Theatre* by Kurt Ganzl adopt the opposite approach, forsaking all pictures but offering well over 2,000 closely printed pages of text. The basic form of the work is a list of production and cast details of every British musical staged in London between 1865 and 1984, though there is a good deal of additional information: many touring productions are included in Volume One, and new titles offered by repertory companies figure in Volume Two. The span and scope of the work supplement coverage of the subject in such series as *Who's Who in the Theatre*, the *Era* and *Stage Year* books, and the volumes so far published of *The London Stage* by Peter Wearing. Not only are director, musical director, designer and choreographer recorded, but the length of run, changes of cast during the run, and alternates or understudies appear, together with revivals, American productions, Paris and Vienna performances, film versions and a discography.

These details are given year by year, preceded by an account of the year's achievements that dispels a firm grasp of the theatrical background. The reader is given a liberal taste of the lyrics of many shows and a limited sampling of the press, mostly *The Times*, the *Era* and the *Singer*, although the author draws on his own, engagingly individual views of recent work. A substantial portion of these annual accounts is devoted to describing the plot of the piece in question, always a sentence of hard labour for both writer and reader, and in the case of the musical often counter-productive. More seriously, the adoption of a year-by-year assessment precludes any overall view of the subject. It is difficult, for instance, to discover any clear reason for the choice of 1865 as a starting-point. "A chronicle must have its boundaries", writes the author disarmingly, noting that his

Professor Mellers, of course, is celebrated for the catholicity of his musical tastes, which are backed by a vast range of cultural knowledge, and sometimes derided for his propensity for naming previously unsuspected symptoms in semi-penetrable passages of jargon, hyphen and pun. *Angels of the Night* will not disappoint. The reader will find Blossum Dearie and Delius sharing a predicament over the role of chromatic harmony, while Henry Purcell is exhumed as a forerunner of Laurie Anderson's ritual music-theatre. The Monody of Deprivation and the White Euphoria are spotted, the Hollywood Dream minted, and the New Eve in her Eulenic Garden pursued through the final chapters. And, as ever, the sheer dedication to creative listening and love of the subject command one's respect.

His chapter on Joni Mitchell amounts in an anatomy of the emotional and musical interaction in her recorded output over seventeen years, and is perhaps the best thing here. Rightly rating her with Bob Dylan, Randy Newman and Tom Waits as a supertuitive singing poet-composer, he pronounces vulnerability the essence of her art. Discussing individual songs, he itemizes subdominant chords as an indication of moroseness, and finds indecision mirrored in a melody "which hovers around the fifth and aspires to the ninth, and a tonality which oscillates between upper and lower mediant". There is a glossary of musical terms at the back of the book where one can track down the Mixolydian character of Mitchell's "Chelsea Morning", but musical literacy would seem to be a requirement.

Mellers enjoys paradox. The gospel singing of Mahalia Jackson presents a vision of bliss even when her words describe spiritual des-



A detail from a photograph of Marie Lloyd with her dresser; it is taken from *A Star is Torn*, reviewed here.

peration; the solitariness of the blues has become a communal experience. At times, this taste ties the writer's knots too tightly, as "the jazz of de-slaved Blacks helped dream-enslaved Whites towards their own spiritual liberation". He seems very hard on the Jewish songsmiths—"the inspired banalities of [Irving] Berlin" and "the modest wit" of Lorenz Hart—who hardly subscribe to the creed of vulnerability and spontaneity, and this antipathy leads him into daff attacks on numbers like "Let's Call The Whole Thing Off". "To call the calling off off is a joke that leaves us where we were—so is it, after all, funny?" It is funny. To criticize the songsmiths of the period on these grounds is akin to complaining that Preston Sturges lacked the higher seriousness of Fritz Lang.

He is least illuminating on the jazz singers, and there is a welter of mistaken names—Chuck Corea, Wyton Kelly, Wardell Grey, Mose Allinson, Eddie Haywood. The old cavil about Sarah Vaughan's merely technical artistry surfaces again, as "she knows what she is doing even in her most ecstatic flights"—surely a dangerous statement on several counts. Abbey Lincoln is rightly rescued from near-obscure, but her work on Max Roach's "We Insist! Freedom Now Suite"—surely germane to Mellers's dynastic line leading from Vera Hall—is ignored. The last great jazz singer, Betty Carter, receives an endorsement but has

been more satisfactorily considered in Gary Giddins's *Riding on a Blue Note*.

Oddly enough, Professor Mellers reserves his severest criticisms for Tammy Wynette, declaring her image "nauseous" and her voice "low, warm and yielding, as befits a doornat", while the feminist writers remark only upon "the bold, free, solo presence" of the singer of "Stand By Your Man". They miss few other opportunities to slam the conventional marriage, however, and even hunt down poor Vincente Minnelli for not giving up his career to nurse his wife, Judy Garland. *A Star is Torn* is an angry and intemperate book, and it is often misleading. It reserves its highest praise for bisexual battlers like Bessie Smith and Edith Piaf, but engages the emotions only in the chapter on Judy Garland's destruction by L. B. Mayer at MGM.

Not all of Billie Holiday's greatest friendships were with women—what about Lester Young and Max Jones?—and not all of these stars were silenced: Billie Holiday and Frances Farmer wrote autobiographies. Judy Holiday fought the studios on the issue of Jewishness on screen, and died of cancer at forty-three, "increasingly considered to be a stress-related disease". The most obvious piece of fudging is revealed in the case of Janis Joplin, who hardly fits the dictum that "in essence, the women died of deprivation, and the men of excess".

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## Remainders

### Eric Korn

The deconstructionists took over *Dallas* recently, and the face of snark will never be the same. Confronted (there is someone somewhere who doesn't know all this) with the need to hold falling mtngs., script writers decided to bring back a popular character, hampered by the fact that he had died fairly publicly thirty-one episodes back. It just took one giant leap and Bobby was free, and alive again. They could have pretended that the car crash was just a misunderstanding, or it could have been a double or a conspiracy or a lung lost twin. Instead they decided to shake readers' faith in the whole fictional process by declaring that it was a dream and continuing with a waking reality in which everything else was unchanged.

If all time is eternally present, all time is unredeemable, said TSE. (not Lao Tse the Oriental metaphysician, but TSE OM, the Occidental one). Since *Dallas* episodes are not eternally present, they are redeemable, like the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*: Boly's death is a non-event, like Trotsky's role in 1917.

I'm not too worried about the effect these deconstructions will have on the public image of the infallible narrator. I am afraid of epistemological contagion. Of Heisenbergian uncertainty spreading out of soaps into other drama, into documentary, into current affairs.

At this point I had planned to introduce a jolly jest about our current leader's just being Edward Heath's bad dream but the whole idea was done by some television satirist yesterday, and I have had to think again. It's like a bad dream . . .

\* \* \*

The Post Office continues its vendetta against literature.

I say, old boy, that's a bit strong isn't it?

New rates came out last week, moderate – only slightly above cost of living increases for the most part, 17p to 18p, that kind of thing, and an imaginative reduction of letter rates to the EEC, inviting us to think of Europe as inland, Padua in the same universe of discourse as Peebles, Lisbon and Lisburn on the same wavelength, Salford indissolubly linked to Salonika. Guess who is paying for this international epistolary agape? Printed matter (reduced rate), that's who, the way you send Bibles to Bulgaria, encyclopaedias to Kiribati, heavy tomes to Tuvalu. (Slight volumes of verse, if they are printed on India paper, can affordably be sent letter or air parcel rates: If they are modish first editions you would probably prefer to send them Datapost to be sure of

getting them to the customer before the fashion changes.) But if they are worthy, pondorous and of slight monetary value, Bulgarian grommars, for example, then they need to travel by the cheapest rate.

Which has just been raised by around 30 per cent.

Because of the Post Office's vendetta against literature.

If my income depended on the survival of Gutenberg technology, I would try and keep peoples' minds off instantaneous data transmission and encourage their faith in hard copy, except that I would find a more positive sense for it. Firm copy, perhaps. Real copy. Something that suggests that digitized stuff is unstable, shifting, fickle, feminine (à la pensier) and foreign.

It does, come to think of it, my income, depend on the survival of.

In 1971, after decimation, the cheap-printed rate cost 1p for 40z. Something just over a kilo – all parcels weigh just over, not just under – would have been 9p.

Nuw it's £2.90.

Annual increase 26 per cent.

And yet the government has, has it not, ended inflation?

Vendetta, I say again.

\* \* \*

Should you be looking for the opportunity (and who knows what evil lurks or was it dwells in the hearts of men?) of writing a lot of rude words on an official looking form, the opportunity may be close. Just write to Reinhold Aman at *Maledicta*, 331 S Greenfield Avenue, Waukesha, Wisconsin 53186-5853 and he will send you *MOQ*, the major research tool for the production of *DRAT*, *Maledicta*'s answer to *DARE*.

I had better start again. Reinhold Aman, apart from being the only human in North America to know his full ZIP-code, is also a Bavarian word collector who was driven out of academic life for taking an (allegedly) unwholesome interest in those parts of speech other philologists didn't reach. A good many years ago, a periodical called *Maledicta*, the International Journal of Verbal Aggression, took a scholarly or, as others would put it, an unscholarly interest in coprology: the vocabulary of love, excrement, and related matters. You might think all this has been a trifle superseded by modern non-judgmental lexicography, but the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (*DARE*, a punning acronym which bespeaks, of course, not boldness, but native birth, after Virginia Dare, the first WASP baby – or larva – born in North America), a huge inter-state project, coming out of Madison,

Wis., under the care of one Professor Cassidy, is said (by *Maledicta*) to be ignoring words that might bring a flush to a cheek. Professor Cassidy denies that this is so and – according to a newspaper report circulated by Aman – says that many four-letter words aren't regional but "everybody's property"; he adds, with what sounds like a suspicion of petulance, that this was the first criticism he had received, and refuses to discuss any criticism not printed in a scholarly journal (for which purpose, clearly, *Maledicta* doesn't count), a low blow against the unfortunate non-professor (the rank is but the guinea's stamp, Aman's a man for a' that) and not one which will win friends. Aman is planning a counterstrike. It might be called Double-DARE but Aman (ever handy with the acronyms), prefers *DRAT*, the *Dictionary of Regional Antiquarian Terms*. The sanguine Aman will send out 2,000 copies of *MOQ*, the *Maledicta* Onomastic Questionnaire, which will yield one-and-a-half million entries, with sufficient detail, he hopes, to answer such questions as "Do homosexual men use wittier euphemisms than lesbians? Are there different terms for pimples in Wales and South Africa? Does 'cock' have different meanings in Louisiana and New Hampshire?" All those questions you were afraid to ask the family lexicographer. So it is most important that you answer the personal information section (data concerning your race, class, and radical, sexual and linguistic preference will be treated confidentially) and don't use non-standard religious like Bananology (his example). And don't tear out the questionnaire if you are reading this in a library but write to him and he will send you extra copies to give to your friends especially if they are Native American, gay, Eskimo, fishermen, truckdrivers, senior citizens or all of the above. Explain anything that has affected the language you speak such as an Irish Gael grandfather, a former husband who cursed in Yiddish, father a sailor etc.

All right, then. What is your word for public hair? For scrotum ("scrotum only, not including testicles"). Do you have different terms for raised and sunk navels? What is your name for? How do you talk about? What verbs and phrases do you use to indicate special kinds (slow fast strong etc, eg: "he/she . . . like . . .") What words do you use for, a) dry hard nasal mucus b) moist nasal mucus c) yellowish coughed-up . . . Stop giggling in the back there, this is lexicography.

Then there are model situations. (XIII) It's a hot and sticky summer day. You are trying to study with the windows open. The neighbour's

dog has been barking under your window. What do you yell at the dog, eg "Shut up, you . . ." (X12.) What else would you shout? (X11) Do you own a dog?

Or you are in a supermarket check-out ("not appropriate for certain areas of the world, there are no supermarket check-out lines in a small African village") when a well-dressed middle-aged woman snoozes in your face. What would you say or shout? What if it is a sixty-five-year-old man? What if it is a five-year-old boy who vomits over your groceries? A five-year-old girl? A forty-one-year-old gay Eskimo truckdriver with a Gaelic/Yiddish grandmother? But would you say that if he didn't keep a dog?

I think I've given you the flavour of it. As Aman says, it will cost him at least \$20,000 and untold hours of work, but it will cost you just a postage stamp and two hours as so to participate in this pioneering historic unique fascinating and useful survey.

All right then, 331, South Greenfield, O Am, an X-151 I gave you his address already.

Don't send the answers to me, bear in mind that the post office have regulations about this kind of thing, and y'all have a right nice day, hear.

\* \* \*

We all do our best to preserve and at the same time enlarge the liberties of language, even if my own modest attempts at enrichment lead to accusations that I can't tell conservative from butter (see *TLS* Letters, October 31). My courteous corrector, Mr George Heygate, says "conserve" is a transitive verb, when what he means to say is that *OED* only records transitive uses. (If I'd spoken, barbarously, of things conservating themselves he would have no grounds for complaint.) "To what purpose the conservation of texts?" as someone asked in 1641.

The *New Statesman* columns are a good place to botanize among new denative forms, some of which seem to be part of a political agenda, I'm not sure whether they middle "diffuse" and "defuse", two rather different ways of dealing with a crisis (one way it blows over, the other way it doesn't blow up), but everyone else does; and this week I found the marvellous coinage "fusillage" and the phonetic spelling "vulnerable". "Heterosexual" has displaced "Alsatian" as the most popular mis-spelling, and is used as a mild pejorative. To me it has a louché, sexist, Gallic sound: "anyone sin *Heterosexual*", a story of nauty capers at Londres hairpot?"

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Fleur Adcock is the editor of *The Oxford Book of Contemporary New Zealand Poetry*, 1983. Her *Selected Poems* was published in 1983.

Malcolm Barber is a lecturer in History and Director of the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Reading. He is the author *The Trial of the Templars*, 1978.

Brian Case is the author of *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Jazz*, 1978.

Peter Clarke is a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge. His *Liberals and Social Democrats*, 1981, is now available in paperback.

Tim Congdon is the chief economist at L. Messel and Company, and the author of *Monetary Control in Britain*, 1982. He is writing a book on the worldwide growth of debt called *The Debt Traps*.

Nicholas Deakin is Professor of Social Policy at the University of Birmingham and co-author of *Governance and Urban Poverty*, 1984. He is completing a study of social policy under the present Government.

P. N. Furbank is Visiting Professor in Literature at the Open University. His most recent book, *Unholy Pleasure: The idea of social class*, 1985, has just been released in paperback.

William H. Gass is the David May Distinguished University Professor in the Humanities at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri. His most recent collection of critical essays, *Habitations of the World*, was the National Book Critics Circle Award for criticism in 1985.

John Goy is the author of *The Public Career of Sir Thomas More*, 1980.

Anthony Hobson's books include *Great Libraries*, 1970, and *Apollonian Pegasus: An enquiry into the foundations and dispersal of a Renaissance library*, 1975.

Ian Ker is the Roman Catholic Chaplain to the University of Southampton. He is writing an intellectual biography of Cardinal Newman.

Ian Ker is a lecturer in Modern History at the University of Manchester. His books include *The Nazi dictatorship: Problems and perspectives of interpretation*, 1985. His *"Hitler myth": Image and reality in the Third Reich* will be published next year.

Eric Korn is an antiquarian bookseller in London.

David Lehmann is the editor of *Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Reformism*, 1976.

Peter Lineham is a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge. He is the author of *Spanish Church and Society, 1550-1600*, 1984. He is writing a history of royal and ecclesiastical ideology in medieval Spain.

John McGilchrist is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and a medical student at the University of Southampton. He is the author of *Against Criticism*, 1982.

A. J. Nicholls is a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. He is writing a book on the social market economy in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Simon Rae's poems appeared in *Faber's Poetry Introduction 4*, 1982.

George Rowell is Reader in Theatre History at the University of Bristol. His books include *The Repertory Movement: A history of regional theatre in Britain*, 1984.

Charles Webster is Director of the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, University of Oxford, and has recently completed the Official History of the National Health Service.

John Whale is Head of Religious Programmes for BBC Television, and the author of *One Church, One Land*, 1979. He is the editor of *The Hope from Poland*, 1980.

Percy Williams is a Fellow and Tutor in Modern History at New College, Oxford, and co-editor of the *English Historical Review*. He is the author of *The Tudor Regime*, 1979.

## Letters

### The Creation of Channel Four

Sir, – I was abroad when you published Noel Annan's review of *The BBC and Public Service Broadcasting*, edited by Colin MacCabe and Oliver Stewart (September 12). I do not complain of Lord Annan's perverse misinterpretation of my views: anyone who knows me will simply laugh at his ascribing to me "sublime indifference to the quality of programmes".

My objection is to his re-writing of history. Annan claims that the Conservative government elected in 1979 "set up Channel Four on the lines the [Annan] Committee had suggested". That government did nothing of the sort. The Open Broadcasting Authority, as proposed by the Annan Committee, would undoubtedly have collapsed, and the government was right in rejecting such a proposal, and in setting up Channel Four with its present structure (which even Anthony Smith has admitted makes more sense than the OBA).

Lord Annan and Anthony Smith are entitled to their mutual admiration society – I subscribe to at least one half of it myself. What they are not entitled to do is credit each other with the creation of Channel Four. Thousands of people were involved in the campaign for a fourth channel, long before the Annan Committee was appointed, let alone reported. John Birt and I have never claimed any specific influence in the outcome: only to have got the structure right in 1972, something that Lord Annan failed to do in 1976; and still fails to understand.

DAVID ELSTEIN.  
Times Television, 306-16 Euston Road, London NW1.

### Aspects of Copyright

Sir, – Bruce Hunter's letter published in your issue of October 31 explains the Publishers Association guidelines but may be misleading if taken as a correct statement of the law. It is well established that the question whether part of a literary work that has been used for criticism or review is a substantial part is only one of the several factors to be taken into account in deciding whether or not the use is a fair dealing. (*Johnstone v. Bennet Jones Publications* [1938], a decision on the Copyright Act 1911). Neither the Copyright Act 1956 nor the relevant cases indicate how many words might constitute a fair dealing. In *Hubbard v. Vosper* (1972) one of the Court of Appeal judges thought that there might well be occasions where it was a fair dealing to quote the whole of a text. The guidelines are only a rule of thumb. There may well be cases where it is appropriate to disregard them.

LIONEL PHILLIPS.  
Sackler and Partners, 43 Great Marlborough Street, London W1.

### Sergei Eisenstein

Sir, – I have only recently seen Richard Taylor's review in your June 27 issue of *Unholy Memories: An autobiography of Sergei Eisenstein*, which I translated. Without explaining himself, he says that those who have been awaiting an English translation will be bitterly disappointed; and, entirely irrelevantly, he accuses me of using a different book to settle old scores.

I do not want to use a short letter to point out actual errors of fact in his review. In any case he was only repeating what he had already written in a review of the same book for another journal, in which he described me as "a veteran cold warrior who misses no opportunity to make an anti-Soviet gibe".

Herein, I suspect, lies the truth. In the course of my work I have found a small group of pro-Soviet critics who consistently attack me for my anti-Stalinism and the fact that I have exposed the frequent unsoundness of Soviet scholarship in the area of the performing arts. Mr Taylor clearly belongs to that group, as his whole review reveals. What his review does not reveal is that he himself is editing another translation of the same Eisenstein material. I think your readers are entitled to take this into account in assessing the value of his damning and denigratory comments. If I am

trying to settle any old scores, as he puts it, my only concern has been to tell the truth about events that I witnessed personally in Moscow: notably about the Stalinist terror wherein so many of my comrades were imprisoned, executed or died in Gulag – all of which Richard Taylor and people like him seem to want to cover up.

HERBERT MARSHALL.  
Center for Soviet and East European Studies, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Illinois 62901.

### Austria and Nazism

Sir, – J. W. Bruegel (Letters, October 17) is largely right about Otto Bauer but almost wholly wrong about Karl Renner.

Bauer did indeed argue in the *Sozialistischer Kampf*, the paper of the Austrian Socialists in exile (but in June not May 1938), that working for the restoration of an independent Austria rather than a Greater German socialist revolution would be reactionary. Doubtless he would have revised his views once their unreality became clear, but it is hard to believe that the change would have been much swifter or much less awkward than that actually made by the rest of the exiled Austrian Socialists between 1938 and 1943.

As for Renner, Professor Bruegel is altogether too charitable. Renner's endorsement of the *Anschluss* was not, as once asserted, the result of Gestapo pressure. The pressure was all on Renner's side. He even proposed having his picture printed on a poster appealing to the workers to endorse the *Anschluss*. Later in 1938, in a pamphlet intended for publication, he hailed the march into the Sudetenland as bringing about the unity of the German Volk in "all its regions" (*In allen Gauen*).

ROBERT KNIGHT.  
10 Hever Place, Canterbury, Kent.

### 'The Blind Watchmaker'

Sir, – Stephen R. L. Clark (Letters, October 24) flatly denies (his expression) that in his review of Richard Dawkins's *The Blind Watchmaker*, he "argued from the meaningfulness of such expressions as 'the God of Israel' (by which [he] meant only the God described by the Israelites) to His . . . extra-linguistic reality" (my italics), and professes not to understand my complaint. Could I make just a few points, as briefly as possible, in reply?

First, I did not, in fact, say that he did so argue; only that he begged the question (whether a god exists) by his use of such capitalized expressions. The point is simple: if Dawkins accepts his statement "What God has 'created' is a universe within which evolution does occur" than he commits himself to the existence of a being called "God". But if he denies it then he admits that a being called "God" created a universe in which evolution does not occur, and he is still committed to the existence of such a being. This is just one of many statements in the review which beg precisely the question at issue.

I can only suppose, from his use of capitals in his reply (italics above), that Clark has not grasped the point that no statement which purports to refer to something *the existence of which is in dispute* can be used in an argument in defence of its alleged existence, without begging the question. In short, in a context in which the existence of a god is in dispute, to refer to "God's existence", "God's design" and "little images of the Eternal God" is as question-begging as referring, in a discussion with a mathematician, to The Largest Prime Number. This insidious misuse of capital letters is not normal philosophical practice; hence my complaint. Clark's misquotation of that complaint as one of "professional misconduct" suggests a rather hasty reading of my letter, which may account for his missing the point.

Finally, I notice that he does not retract his claim that whatever may be the case in sciences such as biology, truth in fact reached through love, awe, and worship. His theological colleagues might possibly agree, but not, I suspect, many of his philosophical colleagues.

G. B. KEENE.  
Department of Philosophy, University of Exeter, Exeter, Devon.

### The Doppelgänger Motif

Sir, – In Robert Alter's interesting brief essay on the *Doppelgänger* motif (October 24), I was surprised to find no mention of one English work which I should have thought very useful to his argument: Chaucer's "Finn's Tale".

In Pasolini's film of *The Canterbury Tales*, this episode stands out by reason of its eerie calmness, the instant unsurprised complicity between the two disney-met travellers. Pasolini, of course, inherited a tradition; but he is true to his original. Chaucer anticipated, to a surprising degree, the shape-shifting Gil-Martin of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and the irrational identification of host with *Doppelgänger* in "The Secret Shiner".

He is also rather chilling, as when the corrupt summoner urges the "gay yeoman", his new "brother", to complete their introductions:

"Wel he we met, by God and by Selmi Jume! But, levee brother, let us thanne thy name. Quod this somenour, in this meene while This yeman gan a list for in sayle. "Brother," quod he, "wiltow that I thee telle? I am a feend; my dwelling is in helle . . ."

RANDOLPH STOW.  
36 King's Head Street, Harwich, Essex.

### Oskar Kokoschka

Sir, – Richard Calvocoressi (Letters, October 24) is wrong in supposing I must have been of the Kokoschka symposium and heard Professor Spielmann speak of the painting "Knight Errant". I was not there; neither did I have any report of it. But since my Kokoschka piece appeared (October 3) I have heard from others of the painter's habit of inventing new explanations of his work – including, not by second sight but through living intermediaries, from the late Count Sellen who witnessed Kokoschka's ever-new accounts of the "Prometheus" triptych.

So Spielmann was not letting a new cat out of the bag in hinting at Kokoschka's verbal inventiveness. Why then do Kokoschka scholars cling to a particular version as though it were canonical? I know that he sometimes represented himself as Christ; I said so. I know

### FIFTY YEARS ON

*The TLS of November 7, 1936, carried a review of Evelyn Waugh's Waugh in Abyssinia, from which these extracts are taken:*

Abyssinia . . . is a country of extremes, of parched and burning deserts, of cold and windswept uplands. There is indeed the middle zone, the temperate *wolna dega*, but few writers have been content to dwell in it, and those few have also been content to write of trivialities, of journalistic bickerings, cafés and alien adventures – in fact, of anything but the real Abyssinia.

Remembering *Black Mischief* and reading Mr Waugh's presumably punning title, one might expect to find him among the dwellers in the *wolna dega*, though standing head and shoulders above his neighbours for the distinction of his writing and his wit. There one does indeed find him in the middle portion of his book, making great play with the Deutsches Haus, Le Perroquet and Le Select, his comic-

### INFORMATION, PLEASE

Victor Weiss ("Vicky") (1913-66): for a book and for a retrospective exhibition to be held in the National Portrait Gallery in 1987; any information, personal reminiscences; or original drawings that readers are prepared to lend to the exhibition.

Liz Outway.  
Cartoon Centre, University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NU.

Marlene Lucas, author of *Two Englishwomen in Rome 1871-1900* (Methuen, 1938): whereabouts of collections of letters from which those in the book were selected; for a historical study.

T. P. Wiseman.  
Department of Classics, The University, Exeter EX4 4QH.

Stanuel Jolinson: any information on unpub-

lished letters in private collections, or on letters that have clung hands since the previous edition (Oxford, 1952); for a new edition of the complete letters.

Bruce Redford.  
The Hyde-Princeton Edition of the Letters of Samuel Johnson, Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey 08540, USA.

James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903): any extant letters; or transcriptions thereof, between the artist and the lithographic printing firm of Thomas Way and Son, to include correspondence with Thomas Way, Thomas R. Woy or H. E. Morgan; for inclusion in a publication by Yale University Press.

Nicholas Smole.  
Department of Art, Faculty of Art and Design, Coventry (Lanchester) Polytechnic, Gosford Street, Coventry CV1 3RZ.

### Origins of 'It'

Sir, – Gavin Ewart, in his review (October 31) of *The 'It' Girls* by Meredith Etherington-Smith and Jeremy Pilcher, has been misled in his attribution of the use of "it" for sexual glamour to Elinor Glyn in her short story of that name in 1926. The originator of this use was probably Rudyard Kipling in his short story "Mrs Bathurst" of 1914. Mrs Bathurst kept a small hotel near Auckland, and the Navy men, talking about her in Cape Town, had each seen her only a very few times, but every one of those times they remembered. As Mr Pycroft, the petty officer, says, "Tis'n beauty, so to speak, nor good talk necessarily. It's just it. Some women'll stay in a woman's memory if they once walk down a street . . ."

Elinor Glyn's "*It*" and *Other Stories* was, incidentally, published in 1927, not 1926.

MARGHANITA LASKI.  
Capo di Monte, Windmill Hill, London NW3.

opera spies and oddly assorted colleagues of the Press. But in his more serious mood – and the book is in the main a serious one – he joins the ranks of the extremists, becoming a most bitter critic of the old regime with hardly a kind word to spare for Abyssinian morals, men or manners; and a most confirmed adherent of the Italian idea . . .

At Addis Abbaba he was most favourably impressed by General Graziani. True, he was driven home from dinner with a machine-gun on the box, but concluded that though there was some discomfort, there was little real danger in the situation of the Italians. And, homeward bound, he traversed the completed section of the Great Trunk Road which will one day span Abyssinia from north to south . . . In it he sees the promise of order, fertility, and peace. Some may think that its foundations were laid in arrogance and dishonour; but all will hope that it will serve the purpose which Mr Waugh, cynic turned Idealist, foretells.

## Sales of books

### H. R. Woudhuysen

The strength of the market for colour-plate books was made vividly apparent during Christie's sale of books on October 15: it was a remarkably successful occasion which left only about 3 per cent of the lots unsold. The best prices were made by the set of Gould's works which were property of the Trustees of the Fitzwilliam Settlement. These were not in good bindings, but they were exceptionally fine copies internally with an impeccable provenance and went for record prices: *The Birds of Australia* was the most expensive at £115,000 against a pre-sale estimate of £70,000-£90,000; next *The Mammals of Australia* fetched £48,000 when it had been estimated to go for £35,000 at most, and *The Birds of Asia* reached £44,000 against a similar pre-sale estimate. The other record price in the sale was the £58,000 that was paid for a copy in a full contemporary binding of Brookshaw's *Pomona Britannica* (estimate £35,000-£40,000). The nice set of *The Botanical Magazine*, 1787-1983, with over 11,500 hand-coloured plates in 167 volumes went for £52,000; the highest estimate before the sale of only £35,000 may have reflected the fact that a similar set, not so attractively bound, had failed to sell at Sotheby's earlier in the year.

Elsewhere in the sale the interest in Austro-

lian material held up well; a good copy of the finest colour-plate book on that continent, the former convict Joseph Lycett's *Views in Australia*, or *New South Wales & Van Diemen's Land Delineated*, 1824, fetched £22,000 (estimate £20,000-£25,000). The atlases in the sale were also sought-after. The nine volumes in contemporary vellum of the Dutch text of Blaeu's *Atlas Maior*, Amsterdam 1648-1664, made £52,000 and rather more surprisingly an incomplete copy of Speed's *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain*, 1676, lacking the title and four maps, went for £17,000; when it had been expected to fetch £8,000 at most. After Christie's sale it will be interesting to watch what sort of prices these glamorous books make in the future.

The next day, October 16, Bloomsbury Book Auctions' general sale produced few surprises: books by Robert Graves were reasonably successful, with a signed first edition of his Hogarth Press *The Marmoside's Miscellany*, 1925, going for £160 to Rota (estimate £100-£150). A large paper copy of Samuel Haume's *A Journey from Prince Wolor's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean*, 1795, went beyond its higher estimate of £900 reaching £1,200, while a single leaf extracted from the Colard Mansion Ovid *Moralisé* of 1484, with an Introduction by the de Hellings issued at Amsterdam in 1963 in an edition of only forty copies, made £900 (estimate £400-£600).



## COMMENTARY

## Taming the tempestuous

Rupert Christiansen

PIETRO MASCAGNI  
Cavalleria Rusticana  
RUGGIERO LEONCAVALLO  
I Pagliacci  
Coliseum

*Cavalleria Rusticana* may not be a subtle opera, but it is a historically significant one, and it is a mistake to think of the verismo style it initiated as merely a matter of blood-and-guts melodrama. The young Mascagni was more genuinely radical in rejecting the Veridian and Wagnerian models to follow the chromatic sentimentality of Massenet, and in attempting to find an operatic equivalent for the new theatrical naturalism, sensationally embodied in the acting of Duse, who had first performed in the play of *Cav* in 1884, six years before the opera's premiere.

But there is no doubt that the hold the opera has maintained is due to its uninhibited emotional crudity. The best performances always give the impression of having been dragged through a bushi buckwards: operatic lore records my number of Santuzza's and Turiddu's mimed by excessively naturalistic biting and kicking during their thunderous duet of reformation.

It is this element of violence that Ian Judge has eradicated from his new production of the opera, and it leaves a gap which makes the piece seem hollow. What he puts in its place is an irrelevance. Succumbing to the prevalent itch to contradict directly the librettist's instructions, he has moved the setting from sun-baked peasant Sicily to a grimy northern mining town. This gives the designer Gerard Howland the excuse for an impressive display of industrial architecture, but the resultant atmosphere is quite wrong for both the action and the musical idiom. *Cav* is a tale of unbridled passion meeting an atavistic code of honour, and without the feeling of primitive rural community, it does not make sense.

As Santuzza – in Verga's original, a woman crazed by her betrayal by Turiddu and the necessity of revenge of him – the English National Opera has cast Jane Eaglen, dressing her as a frumpy bespectacled schoolmistress who would not be out of place in an Arnold Bennett novel. The voice is right enough (though it is steeper at full blast than at any other dynamic level), but her repressed demeanour is absurdly at odds with the obsessiveness of her music. She looks miserable and shabby, but never for a moment a woman in-

come with sexual jealousy, and it is hard to imagine Turiddu giving her a second look when Fiona Kimmi's sassy Lola is simultaneously available. When Callas sang Santuzza on her final concert tour, she pummelled Turiddu's chest with her clenched fist, the physical bond between them still inexorable: the height of this Santuzza's passion is to knock an upturned chair off a table, with Turiddu at a distance of a good five yards.

The loss of tension is exacerbated by Jacques Delucote's warin and sensitive conducting, which brings out the exiguous beauties of the score at the expense of visceral excitement. Tempi were generally too slow, with the climactic duet virtually coming to a halt just at the point when it should let rip. The first lesson of *Cav* is perhaps to be unafraid of the obvious: and it was Zeffirelli who realized that best in his stunningly straightforward production for New York's Metropolitan Opera, complete with a tremendous tumble for Santuzza down a flight of steps and lashings of local colour.

Of *Cav*'s eternal twin, Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*, there is less to say. Judge's other gimmick – and it really is no more than that – is to integrate the two operas by playing them in the same set, with *Pag*'s strolling players arriving in town shortly before Turiddu meets his come-uppance and then attracting the bereaved Santuzza and Mamma Lucia into their audience the same evening. Beyond the demonstration of the necessity for economy in our opera houses, I found this entirely unilluminating.

Again Judge allows his technical expertise (he has clearly learnt from Terry Hands, his mentor at the RSC, the art of making striking stage pictures) to get in the way of focusing on personal agony. Eaglen's Santuzza is at least a coherent presentation of a character; here Rowland Sidwell's Canio is simply a cipher. Despite hopeful quotations from Pirandello in the programme, he completely fails to convey the collapse of the actor's histrionics into real murderous despair; and that wonderful invention "Vesti la giubba" – or, as the translation lamentably insists, "Put on your make-up", whatever became of "On with the motley"? – comes across as no more than phlegmatic.

The excellent Helen Field as Nedda phrases her "Ballatella" beautifully; the chorus are on top form; and Delacote successfully mines for Leoncavallo's Pucciniesque delicacies of scoring. But the whole evening amounts to a wasted opportunity. If we are to see *Cav* and *Pag* afresh, why not break the coupling, and give either of them with Massenet's underheard *La Navarraise* or even Daliapiccola's *Il prigioniero*. We might then be able to understand the fascination of verismo completely.

## Eclectic emotions

Grevel Lindop

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE  
Edward II  
Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester

*Edward II* is Marlowe's least "Marlovian" play. Its construction box-like and claustrophobic, its language terse and bleak, eschewing elaborate imagery for a drabness illuminated by sudden extravagances of brutality or tenderness, it attains, precariously, a classical concentration and intensity.

Tom Cairns's designs interpret the play as a bleak, timeless parable, effectively disorienting us by a wildly eclectic use of costume and props: Edward, under his voluminous crimson robe, is a shrunken, hesitant figure in creased, buggy grey trousers and brocade smoking-jacket. The peers, a crew of slightly dishevelled heavies, circle overbearingly in dark suits, braes and enormous belted raincoats, supplemented as the play goes on by army boots and puttees and giving way finally to breast-plates and chain mail. The Italian "masque" commissioned by Gaveston for his lover is a bizarre Dadaist cahnet: posers, body-builders and transvestites chant rhythmically through an intricate, narcissistic routine of dance and mime, helped out by toy-like props – scarlet eabais, a silver watering-can, a sky-blue walking-stick – which descend from the flies. An enormous tap dominates several scenes and provides, successively, the "channel" where the Bishop of Coventry is ducked by Gaveston, a stream where Queen Isabella splashes her bare feet after her first lovemaking with Mortimer the Younger, and the "puddle water" in which Edward's captors, wielding a pocket switchblade, crudely shave off his beard.

Quite why all this is not fatally distracting is hard to say. Part of the answer must lie in Ian McDiarmid's Edward – surely a definitive interpretation, for all its unconventionality. McDiarmid plays Edward as nervy, ageing, desperate for affection but irritably aware of his failure to command respect, shifting uncertainly between aggressive bluster, childlike expansiveness and petulant self-pity. McDiarmid negotiates the many pitfalls of his part with unfailing resourcefulness, sometimes endorsing the implicit emotionalism of his lines in a voice breaking with tears, at other times effectively underplaying, as when the play's potentially most disastrous line, spoken at the news of Gaveston's execution – "O shall I speak, or shall I sigh and die?" – is given a clipped, weary delivery that allows the self-regarding words to sound both utterly silly and altogether sincere.

Neither Michael Grandage's Gaveston nor Duncan Bell's Mortimer the Younger quite provides an adequate complement to this Edward. Grandage plays Gaveston as a brutally pretty and arrogant loud; but he treats many speeches with a kind of generalized vehemence that enables him to evade the crucial question of his motivation – love for Edward or social ambition? – and lays no foundation for the stoicism of his death. It is not clear that he has formed any coherent conception of the part. Duncan Bell likewise fails to build the puffy panache and opportunism needed by Mortimer the Younger.

This matters less, however, because the strongly symbolic staging transforms the play into an ensemble piece, a crowded vortex where only Edward, at the centre, needs a full individuality. At its best the elaborate stage business enriches the text in a way that recalls Peter Brook's legendary *Midsummer Night's Dream*. To give one example, as the penitent Edward with the loss of his foreign possessions they wind him, mummy-like, in the red carpet he has laid for Gaveston's return from banishment, until he is swaddled to the neck. The sense of rage and frustration, combined with pathetic inadequacy, evoked by this ludicrous image culminates in the moment when Edward, gasping "Shall the crawing of these cockerels / Affright a lion? Edward, unfold thy paws!", just succeeds in jerking his hands – but not his wrists – clear of the red swathings.

In the last act, things are drabber. Edward's enforced shaving leaves the stage, already covered with peaty earth, ankle-deep in mud and this becomes the dominant image of the play's conclusion. Thrones are set up in it, royal robes dragged across it, and on it is flung the stained and soaked mattress where Edward, compressed not by the table of the text but by the upturned throne itself, is, with appropriate but not excessive horror, spilt by Lightborn.

This is a flawed production, but an unfurlingly gripping one; at times aggressive and incoherent, but more often felicitously inventive and wonderfully exciting in asserting the theatrical claims of its text.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 302

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than November 28. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case helpful guesswork will also be taken into consideration. Entries, marked "Author," Author 302" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on December 5.

1 "Well, when I am fifty-three or so I would like to write a novel as good as *Persuasion*, but with a modern setting, of course. For the next thirty years, or so I shall be collecting material for it. If anyone asks me what I work at, I shall say, 'Collecting material'."

2 "I must go and write my novel", she said. "I've got Monday's instalment to send off by train tonight. You'll go into my study. Valentine will give you paper, ink, two different kinds of albs. You'll find Professor Wannop's books all round the room."

3 "It is one of the most exacting of the arts," said Z... "Is it? Is that so? Well you know best. But I always feel I could write a novel if I tried."

Competition No 298  
Winner: Margaret Taylor  
Answers:

1 Symptoms of true love  
Are leanness, jealousy,  
Laggard graves.  
Robert Graves, "Symptoms of Love".

2 How often have my sighs declared mine anguish,  
Wherein I daily languish.  
Yet doth she still procure it;  
Heart, let her go, for I cannot endure it  
Walter Devison, "Ode".

3 Now do I nightly waste, wanting my kindly rest,  
Now do I daily starve, wanting my lively feast,  
Now do I always die, wanting thy timely aid,  
Edmund Spenser, "Hambicium Trimerium".

*The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* is reissued this week in paperback (248pp, Picador, £3.50, 0 330 29491 1).

## Appropriate appropriations

Keith Potter

MICHAEL NYMAN  
The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat  
ICA Theatre

The forty-two-year-old English composer Michael Nyman is often portrayed as a slick purveyor of whatever is currently in vogue. And since direct appropriation of the music of others is an important part of his style and method, it is also easy to bring to such a description even more moral disgust than it already contains. Nyman's open borrowing extends some way beyond the common property of the common chard-progression to outright quotation and stylistic allusion. The most famous and perhaps most successful example of this – his music for *The Draughtsmen's Contract* (1982), a film written and directed by the composer's frequent collaborator Peter Greenaway – dealt in some highly appropriate appropriation: Nyman's decking out of Purcell in ironic, "postmodern" garb fitted well into the film-maker's sinisterly systemic though convoluted telling of a tale set in c. 1695. Yet, to some, such justifications are simply symptoms of the present addition to the "neo-tonal cop-out" and the stink of moral decay that goes with it.

One does not have to be in complete agree-

ment with this attitude to approach Nyman's first opera with some unease. *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* takes its name from the title story of a book of case studies by the English-born but now American-based neurologist Oliver Sacks, which was published in 1985 (and reviewed in the *TLS* on February 7, 1986); the opera's libretto, by Christopher Rawlence, tells, in a generally faithful and detailed manner, the author's account of the bizarre but tragic predicament of an elderly enigmatised singer, Dr P, who developed a tumour that destroyed the ordering of his vision. Sacks examines him but only slowly discovers the real nature and extent of his handicap: Dr P can think and hear with all his former perspicacity, but his visual sense is so strangely fragmented and distorted that while he can often decipher abstract shapes and even objects in motion, he cannot recognize a film on television without the sound; a glove, or familiar faces without some particular detail. On leaving Sacks's clinic he even mistakes the head of his wife, who has accompanied him; for his hat on the hot stand.

To put this into a book is one thing, though some might consider that Sacks's success as an author with such sensitive material reflects badly on both him and us (Dr P's widow, for instance, is apparently still alive). To turn it into an opera – even with the agreement of Sacks, who took his bow with the others on the

first night – is to risk something rather worse than poor taste.

What Nyman has achieved here in a single seventy-minute act – with the aid of Michael Morris's production and Jock Scott's set, into which the composer at the piano and his band of string quartet and harp are cunningly incorporated – is remarkable. The key to the opera's success is that Dr P is forced by his illness to live through music, to regulate his daily actions by it. Nyman has managed to turn that key to highly dramatic but sensitive effect: by seizing on Dr P's beloved Schumann as the basis for the opera's musical style. "Ich grolle nicht" from *Dichterliebe* is performed by Frederic Westcott as Dr P accompanied by Patricia Hooper as his wife in one of the evening's most moving moments. Suffused with Schumann, but expertly put together with only an occasional gentle irony to remind one of its normally rough exterior, Nyman's new version of his familiar manner justifies the story's staging in the most natural and effective way. The only blemish in the first-night performance was the veteran Emile Belcourt's vocal unease in the part of Sacks himself, in a portrayal that was otherwise effortlessly true.

*The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* is reissued this week in paperback (248pp, Picador, £3.50, 0 330 29491 1).

## Self-revealing scenes

Antonia Phillips

Staging the Self: Self-Portrait Photography  
1840s–1980s  
National Portrait Gallery, until January 11,  
1987

In his catalogue essay Jean-François Chevrier raises a problem: if photography is a means for the "objective" reproduction of outward appearances" and if, as is commonly thought, self-portraiture is a vehicle for introspection, how is it possible for there to be self-portrait photography? Unease about the answer permeates one's experience of this exhibition; the catalogue, despite its theorizing and polemics, does little to allay the anxiety. Chevrier's answer is hardly reassuring: "Belief in the truth of the self and belief in the objectivity of the photographic record have perished simultaneously. Every self-portrait, even the simplest and least staged, is a portrait of another."

Self-portrayal need not be an act of soul-searching; many painters have painted themselves simply as something to paint, using their faces and bodies reflected in mirrors as models, as they might those of any other person. Photographers are no different, and some of the pictures in the exhibition are surely of this kind. Even when there is more "self" involved in someone's painting of himself, it need not reach the introspective, self-examining depths of, say, Rembrandt's self-portraits. Painters have represented themselves with varying degrees of intimacy, showing themselves close up or at a distance, at their easels, in their studios with their models, etc. A similar range is to be found in self-portrait photography, which has borrowed freely from the traditions of the

painter portrait, especially in its early stages. There are photographs on show which make their indebtedness very explicit: for example, József Pécsi's self-portrait which mimics an early Renaissance portrait, or Edward Steichen's, in which he holds a palette and brushes.

In spite of these and other similarities, it seems, on the evidence of this exhibition at any rate, that much photographic self-portraiture disappoints an expectation it is natural to bring to it: in looking at a self-portrait we search for some kind of psychological insight. But repeatedly one receives the impression that self-portrait photography has altogether rejected this aspiration.

In portraying himself a painter generally

looks at himself in a mirror, and this fact is often in one or other way a feature of the self-portrait. By contrast, the photographer portraying himself poses for the camera: his glance, when not averted, is directed at a lens, not at himself reflected in a mirror. In making a self-portrait, looking at himself does not constitute a very large proportion of the photographer's activity. Such a difference between the processes of painting and photography must have some consequence on the nature and expressive resources of the self-portrait in each medium.

The photograph of Degas may serve to bring out the difference. If we are to attach significance to the fact that Degas took the photograph, so as to respond to it as a self-portrait,



"The Ennui", 1893, by Frederick Holland Day, a photograph of the photographer in the setting of his choice; from the exhibition reviewed here.

## Dear pickled Hieroglyphick

David Nokes

ALEXANDER POPE, JOHN GAY AND JOHN ARBUTHNOT  
Three Hours after Marriage  
Radio 3

*Three Hours after Marriage* has always been more of a legend than a play. Its notoriety was guaranteed by a confederacy of the duces who condemned it as obscene on its opening night in 1717. Unfortunately, most of the drama associated with the play took place not on stage but in the wings, in quarrels between Pope and Cibber, or in the boos and hisses of the auditorium. Yet, as the letters column of the *TLS* demonstrated last year, valiant efforts are made from time to time to rescue this curious work from the footnotes of theatre history. The rescuers are faced with a formidable task, since this example of Scriblerian collaboration between Pope, Gay and Arbuthnot exhibits the same weakness as their other joint satires, *The Memoirs of Martin Scriblerus* and *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*. First, it is chock-full of satirical allusions to the intellectual fads of the day, so that in its unaltered form virtually every third line requires some scholarly annotation. Second, it is both episodic and disjointed: the literary satire of the first act concerning Sir Tremendous (a portrait of the critic John Dennis) and the lady dramatist Phoebe Clinket (variously identified as Mrs Coolliv or Lady Winchelsea) has no connection with the rest of the play. Similarly the Deptford sailor who suddenly appears in the last act, carrying a babe in arms, is an arbitrary ending applied to a work which shows no sign of developing or denouement of its own.

Despite these many drawbacks, *Three Hours after Marriage* has a strong theatrical impact as a surreal spectacle. With its two starring roles for an Egyptian mummy and a crocodile, the stage business alone can be relied upon to generate laughter. Alas, a radio production can gain no such easy laughs from exploiting the gestures which accompany the rival claims of mummy and crocodile as lovers – the first boasting of his "erect stature", the other of his "long tail". In an attempt to make

dramatic sense of the play Glyn Dearmao has cleared away much of the clutter of satiric details and turned the play into a beaux' strategy, concentrating on the rival schemes of Plotwell and Underplot to cuckold Fossile in the first three hours of marriage. Vincent McInerney's adaptation dispenses with most of the jargon of alchemy and literary criticism to produce an acting text with clear plot lines and at least some semblance of unity. Most of what is omitted will be lamented only by present-day Fossiles who prize the rust above the coin. Yet some alteration here seems both arbitrary and unnecessary. It is not obvious that anything is gained by replacing "suspension of arms" by "truce", or "to my conscience" by "forsooth". Other changes are positively harmful to the

peculiar comedy of this work. One of the best lines in the play occurs when Fossile's bride, Susannah Townley, addresses her mummy-lover, "prithce dear pickled Hieroglyphick". McInerney has unaccountably reduced this to "prithce dear sir."

As Fossile, Maurice Denham gives a performance of huffing dignity, suggesting the humanity of the old cuckold but losing his extravagant lunacy. Patricia Routledge is excellent as the visionary poetess Phoebe Clinket, but Charles Gray is several degrees under the top with the volcanic Sir Tremendous. Altogether, this brave attempt to give the play dramatic coherence sacrifices rather too much of its zany humour. The Scriblerians, if not the inventors of surrealism were at least among its

## Hearing the silent accomplice

David Pryce-Jones

Shoah  
Curzon Cinema, Mayfair

The mass-murder of the Jews by the Nazis still tends to drift away out of emotional grasp into vagueness and a sense of helplessness. Claude Lanzmann is determined that this will no longer do. His nine-hour film *Shoah* gives the Holocaust a setting in which moral certainties may form. As the Holocaust recedes from living memory, it is to be understood and incorporated into history as an expression of evil. In the way that the Renaissance or the Age of Enlightenment express good. Knowledge of good and evil allows European history its meaning, and this attempt to place the net of genocide within that heritage is sometimes very moving, sometimes quite slow and repellent, and always heroic.

Auschwitz, Sobibor, Chelmno, Treblinka are names now appearing on Polish wayside stations, with waiting-rooms and ticket offices. Nearby stand ghostly ruins, mere concrete foundations to some cases, or sites in a forest, with or without memorials.

For the most part, the Poles in the surrounding neighbourhoods are country people. Those

who witnessed mass-murder are now at least in middle-age. Their explanations of events are very simple: this was an issue between the Germans and the Jews, and there was nothing to be done. They explain to the persistent Lanzmann that Jews lived here once, and this was a baker's house, that was a timber merchant's, and over there was a family of three little girls. That they themselves have appropriated these houses and shops, that they were first silent accomplices and later profiteers, is not perceived by any of the scores of Poles whom Lanzmann has given every chance to speak.

Lanzmann has also traced Rudolf Vrba, who escaped from Auschwitz; Jan Karski, the courier who had seen the Warsaw Ghetto with his own eyes and first brought to the Allies the incontrovertible evidence of the Nazi policy of extermination; Richard Glazar and Filip Müller, among others, who survived as auxiliaries in the crematorium; Simon Srebnik who as a thirteen-year-old was left for dead with a bullet in his head but none the less lived to oblige out of a mass-grave. Interviewed, these men often break down. In one lengthy sequence, Simon Srebnik stands in a throng of Polish men and women who remember him as that thirteen-year-old, obliged to run errands for the Nazis. His smile of bewilderment as these Poles give their version of events, with

then what is of interest is not that he pressed the button, but that he composed the picture, that he set up the scene in which to photograph himself. (And given that he is a painter, one expects to see some affinity with the composition of his painting.) Hence, presumably, the title of the exhibition, "Staging the Self", and the reason for including the photographs of Egon Schiele when they do not even claim to be self-portraits: he must have collaborated in their composition.

Approaching self-portrait photography with the traditions of painting in mind, one tends to give the face of the photographer the privileged position it has in the painted portrait and self-portrait as the locus of expression (a position it has partly because it is what the painter looks at much of the time he is making his picture). In photographic self-portraiture it is the *mise-en-scène* which carries the weight of significance, and which occupies so much of the photographer's thoughts, then one would expect that the face of the photographer in the self-portrait is not going to be the primary, or even an important, means of his self-revelation: it will be on a par with everything else on the stage.

This shift from the subject to the stage-setting as a means of self-revelation explains why so many of these photographs seem to be only incidentally self-portraits, and also why they are surprisingly hard to interpret: once the represented face is not the primary repository of psychological insight, the spectator cannot draw so confidently on his natural ability to "read" a face. Photographic self-portraiture is a more autonomous genre than at first appears with apparently very different aims and conventions. What this thought-provoking exhibition fails to do is give the spectator a firm lead in understanding what these may be.

earliest practitioners, and this work would benefit from a production which exploited, rather than one which attempts to conceal, its exuberant randomness. A glance at the dramatic personae reveals a list of characters, either "real" or disguised, more appropriate to a Bedlam freak-show than to a drawing-room or bedroom comedy: a crack-pot scientist, a mad poetess, a smouldering critic, an eccentric Polish professor, a quack-doctor, an Egyptian mummy, a crocodile, an absent-minded judge and a jolly Jack Tar. Most of these figures pop up and disappear like a comic turns with only the most marginal relevance to the plot. This is a play which cries out for the radio style of the *Goon Show* rather than the restrained period comedy of this production.

comments and explanations as though he were not present, in itself justifies the film.

As for the Germans, "terrible times" they all say, without apology or remorse, as though they themselves had not made the times what they were. We are to believe that Franz Suchomel – his face, like his words, quite blank – had no idea of what was taking place in the extermination camp where he had volunteered to work. The deputy commissioner of the Warsaw Ghetto claims that the purpose of his commission was to care for the well-being of the Jews, though this was admittedly impossible, and besides he was only twenty-nine, and a lawyer. "This is getting us nowhere, Herr Lanzmann", is his response on being challenged. Everyone who interviews Germans of this type finds himself providing an outlet for men who refuse to take responsibility for their actions, prevailing if not lying. For the sake of the record, the historian Raul Hilberg has been called upon to explain the background. "Das ist aber sehr wichtig", Lanzmann repeats as he pursues some tiny detail which is not important in itself, but might add to the final picture. One more interview and surely the missing clue will be at hand. Everything we have to know about evil is shown here. Documentation like this is what will convert so much suffering into lasting significance.







# With the brakes off

J. H. C. Leach

W. A. THOMAS  
The Big Bang  
180pp. Philip Allan. £19.95 (paperback,  
£8.95).  
0360035468

The "Big Bang" has been so copiously chronicled that it is necessary here to mention only three of its outstanding characteristics: the merging of the functions of broker and jobber (with the introduction of "dual capacity"); the introduction of negotiated commission rates; and the permission granted to overseas financial institutions to own British brokers or jobbers, or themselves to become members of the London Stock Exchange. One major consequence is the increasing importance of computerization, with the floor of the Exchange becoming correspondingly less important as a market-place. In *The Big Bang* W. A. Thomas has given us a useful overall survey of the changes that are taking place.

The "Big Bang" did not just happen – it was caused. Some of the most interesting chapters of the book are those on the events which led up to the irreversible transformation of the City of London. The most important of which are the growth – bigger and faster than could ever have been imagined – of the Eurobond market, which largely bypassed the traditional London stockmarket (the author might have emphasized this rather more strongly); the increasing realization that the world was becoming a twenty-four-hour market-place, with London (thanks to Greenwich) conveniently placed in the pivotal position; the morose size of even the biggest firms in London when compared with rivals in the United States or Japan; the fact that the London Stock Exchange had for a long time been run along the lines of a

gentlemen's club, in a world where not everyone could be relied on to play according to the codes of Eton or Oxford: these, and other reasons, led to the referral in 1979 of the Stock Exchange's antiquated Rule Book to the Office of Fair Trading. At this point, the Stock Exchange was (to put it coarsely) on a hiding to nothing; and the deal that was ultimately struck with the government, via Cecil Parkinson, in 1983 at least did something to save its face and give it time.

With astonishing speed and (it may be argued) indecent haste London merchant and clearing banks queued up to do deals with stockbrokers and jobbers. Extravagant prices were paid by sophisticated people for goodwill, for "people" and for businesses. These were based on multiples of earnings, made in a high profit, bull-market era, predicated upon fixed commission rates. But the corporate financial results of such deals have yet to be seen, though in human terms there have already been casualties among recipients of the loudly touted "golden hellus".

The author gives a full, if rather dry, account, with some useful documentation, of how all this has come about. He even describes, if briefly, the fortunes of Automated Real-Time Investments Exchange (ARIEL) which, in 1974, foreshadowed in methodological and technological terms so much of what has now taken place on a much larger scale. Having been personally involved in some of the events described, I can vouch for the author's accuracy. Part of the success of the book lies in the way in which it has avoided the temptations of using anecdote or personalities to illustrate important general themes.

In a thoughtful conclusion, the author rightly reminds us that the government's original purpose in fostering change in the City of London was to increase competition, to preserve its role as a major international financial cen-

tre, and thus to create new opportunities for British financiers. He points out that managerial and financial risks faced by the new conglomerates are far harder to control than they at first appeared. New regulatory structures will have to be devised and applied. Foreign ownership of firms will introduce a new international dimension. The full impact of technological advances has yet to be comprehended – and satisfactorily implemented. One may ask whether the Government and the Bank of England will find themselves having to exercise responsibility without also being able to wield adequate power or impose adequate sanctions. In a notorious speech in 1983, Jacob Rothschild quoting Disraeli, said "I have ever been of the opinion that revolutions are not to be avoided." What the eventual outcome of the present one will be only a clairvoyant would care to hazard, though in London the going may prove to be especially tough among the over-populated market-makers in gilt-

edged securities. Will excess capital surge into the market in good times – and out again when interest rates rise? Will the survivors be those who grasp the importance of laying off risk with the greatest speed and efficiency? The reader of this book will at least be well-equipped to form a reasoned judgment, based upon a considered discussion of the facts as they are so far known.

*The Economics of Nonprofit Institutions: Studies in structure and policy* (423pp. Oxford University Press. £35. 0 19 503709 X) edited by Susan Rose-Ackerman has recently been published. The book consists of twenty-two essays subsumed under seven categories: Government failure, Contract failure and information asymmetry, Entrepreneurship and professional control, Charitable deduction, Government grants, Fundraising and Corporate tax benefits.

## A Patient of Dr Rycroft's

Today I am feeling comatose.  
After a long night with Kit.  
But all love is infantile  
and even reactionary men  
have no sense of structure –  
even the most sensitive are incapable  
of lasting personal relationships.  
I regard all sex as masturbatory.  
There's no point in kissing or 'foreplay'.

I have my language, you have yours.  
A lowerarchy is a hierarchy viewed from above.  
You laughed when you asked me  
'Were you annoyed?'  
And I answered 'Annoyed? I was paranoid!'  
Suffixes, prefixes? Who fixes them? I fix them.  
There's iron in irony, although you smile.  
Socrates? How does he come into it?

I don't understand metaphors,  
semaphores and meaningless signals.  
'Getting something off my chest'  
means a bra or a boyfriend.  
Things are things, and not other things.

You're surprised I call them 'lovers' –  
I have so many of them.  
Most, you say, would mistrust, distrust  
such casual encounters. I have no fear,  
once a teenage pillion rider on a wall of death.  
Just as I have no social shyness.

At 10 I decided to be Shakespeare, and a ventriloquist.  
At 17 I wrote a poem identical with one of Verlaine's  
and a melody identical with one by Rachmaninov.  
I could have been a great ballerina.  
I have telepathic powers.  
Freud, you say – 'sexual overestimation of the ego'.

But I have my effigies, and my own theory.  
'Psychically real internal figures'.  
I worked it out myself,  
with the help of two books,  
one by Reik and one by Reich.  
I want to be a child analyst.

Distelligent, sensationful, miswanted –  
you smile at my vocabulary – but I still love cats.  
If there are 'love-objects'  
in this world, they are cats.  
They are overstanding.  
All mothers are sadistic.

I am beautiful, and an petress.  
I also believe I can find a way to be immortal.

GAVIN EWART

# The philosopher at the bedside

Iain McGilchrist

MICHAEL LOCKWOOD (Editor)  
*Moral Dilemmas in Modern Medicine*  
239pp. Oxford University Press. £12.95  
(paperback, £4.95).  
0192177435  
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*The Value of Life*  
281pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £7.95.  
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JAMES RACHELS  
*The End of Life: Euthanasia and morality*  
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(paperback, £3.95).  
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303pp. Peter Owen. £14.95.  
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CARLETON B. CHAPMAN  
*Physicians, Law, and Ethics*  
192pp. New York University Press. \$12.50.  
081471303 9  
DONALD GOULD  
*The Black and White Medicine Show: How doctors serve and fail their customers*  
277pp. Harvish Hamilton. £10.95.  
02411540 X

The powerlessness of the potentially powerful is hard for them to bear; and few have found themselves powerless as often as doctors, particularly before the present era. Faced with a patient for whom nothing could be done in life, it remained to the doctor to show himself wise and powerful in the matters of death. He alone, as he believed, had the understanding and experience to decide its manner and time. This is a caricature of the doctor's view of himself that still has currency. There are undoubtedly physicians who so see themselves; but perhaps as a result of the extraordinary expansion of their capabilities within the therapeutic field, doctors are now at least as likely to see themselves as in need of some guidance where matters of ethics are concerned. This has coincided with a move among moral philosophers towards practical issues, particularly those arising in medical practice, with a view to providing a few answers. Doctors are gradually vacating, and philosophers beginning to colonize, this fertile zone of perplexity and debate. Why, after all, should a doctor imagine that his intuitions are better than ours? Why indeed – but why should a philosopher imagine that his arguments are better than our intuitions? Could it be that one kind of zealous professionalism is in the process of replacing another?

In his contribution to a new collection of essays entitled *Moral Dilemmas in Modern Medicine*, an essay on the ethics of using children in clinical trials, R. M. Hare begins by arguing that those who appeal to intuition "would not use such arguments if they reflected that many moral views that are now abhorrent to us have been in some societies almost universally held: for example that cruelty to animals, or even to blacks, does not matter". Intuition, which education helps to mould, is not to be equated with prejudice, which it helps to erode; and it is doubtful whether such beliefs have ever been "almost universally held" by educated people. It must remain a matter of conjecture whether such views have indeed ever been held by anyone on the basis of intuition; rather than that of entrenched necessity or overriding convenience. It would certainly be bold to attribute the subsequent change of heart to the arguments of moral philosophers. A complex of factors – social, political, economic and cultural – must have given rise gradually to the feeling that such things were wrong; it may be that philosophical argument formed part of that causal complex; but it is just as likely that it was carried along in it. Hare's view seems to imply that the rationalizations of philosophers, unlike lay intuitions, will always lead to the same

conclusion; but if it is true that intuitions vary, it is as true that the opinions of philosophers vary, both with time, and at a point within it.

"If philosophy has any value, its value must lie in exploring with curiosity those things we already believe in our hearts and guts." The medical metaphor is, appropriately enough, Mary Warnock's, and it goes to the heart and guts of a pressing question: what is moral philosophy for? On the Committee of Inquiry into Human Embryology which she chaired, she found herself trying to persuade her lay colleagues that, in Hume's words, "morality is better felt than judged of"; they, it seems, felt that morality should be judged of rationally, and expected her to supply, or at least to sift, the reasons. As she writes in *Moral Dilemmas in Modern Medicine*, she would "disagree entirely" with those philosophers who claim that "feelings alone cannot amount to a moral view, and that morality has to be a matter of reason". Indeed, she writes, changing tack deftly, "the whole notion of reason, on the one hand, and feeling or sentiment, on the other, essentially opposed to each other, seems to me to be a mistake. . . . I don't see why a moral view cannot both be grounded in feelings and at the same time (in some suitably broad sense) be rational, or at any rate not irrational."

Reason and feeling, none the less, do notoriously conflict: any resolution of that conflict cannot itself be made by reason, and in the end our intuitions are all we have to rely on, whether to provide the starting places, or to draw the reasonable boundaries, of reason. What then becomes of moral philosophy? If you accept that intuition is the final arbiter, what is the point of rational debate? Does the role of moral philosophy become to find justifications for "what we already believe in our hearts and guts", and is it then entirely conservative? How can those who are not happy with this conclusion, and who want to accept that intelligent discussion of moral problems can cause us to modify our opinions, reconcile this with a view that rationality has its – intuitively derived – limits?

John Harris, the author of *The Value of Life*, aims to avoid these troublesome issues altogether. Harris's book covers many of the most familiar – as well as some less familiar – problems of modern medical practice, and does so from a strictly rational utilitarian standpoint. For him, morality concerns deeds, not the people who do them. The question: what sort of a man thinks it right to act like this? is never asked, because it is, for him, emptied of its moral import. It is simply the rational man who behaves as Harris prescribes, and the rest are prey to prejudice. This rational man, I should add, finds himself thinking it acceptable to grow babies up to about a year old, in or out of their mothers' wombs, in order to use them for spare parts.

Actually the term he fixes is nine months, but it is not clear why. No magical significance attaches to the period, especially as many of the babies in the world he envisages will never be born at all, never having been in a womb. Now Harris sets store by inviolable creatures called "persons"; if, however, you are not a person, Harris may use you for medical experimentation or cannibalize you for spare parts. Yet at nine months the human embryo is "far short of the emergence of anything that could be called a person"; and Harris is already committed to the view that to protect such "non-persons" where lives could be saved by their sacrifice is passively to commit murder.

Why does Harris not follow his own logic? Could it be that even the rational man has his intuitions and prejudices? Intimations that he has, and that he is still sane enough to be troubled by them, crop up reassuringly throughout the book, like chocolate fudge cake in a health food shop. "Whether we should permit, for example, the growing of clones to adult maturity as living organ banks . . . is a question we cannot address here." Cannot? Why not? This seems like just the sort of question a book on ethics should be looking at rather carefully, once it has outlined the usefulness of having clones around for this sort of purpose. The utility is not in dispute – the question is, is it good?

Asking the right question, especially when it comes to the foetus, proves difficult indeed. Harris's question, "is it a person?" is a sort of double-or-quits for the foetus, from which, if

the answer is yes, we conclude that it is no different from its mother, and if no, that it may be treated like a laboratory animal. Yet a person is not an absolute. As Bernard Williams writes in the conclusion of an essay contributed to *Moral Dilemmas in Modern Medicine*, and which contains some subtle reflections on the different kinds of "slippery slope" argument: "almost all the characteristics associated . . . with being a person, such as the capacities for responsible action, for relations with others, for first-personal reflection, and so on, come in degrees. Moreover they come in different degrees, and are not simply correlated with each other, nor with different ages, states of mental health, or other such attributes. This concept, despite its absolute appearance, will provide no firm basis for rules about killing and similar matters, and those who place faith in it are deceiving themselves."

Harris's criteria for recognizing persons from the outside (language for the lower animals, recognizing one's own reflection for the talking ones) are open to both theoretical and practical objections, and are indeed mutually inconsistent. And even if this were not the case, we would be no further forward, since there are many things in life – animals and trees, for example, but also works of art or country houses – with which, though they are obviously not "persons" like ourselves, we may not be free to do what we like.

Michael Lockwood, in one of the longer contributions to *Moral Dilemmas*, of which he is the editor, examines the question of what may be done to the foetus, and like Harris looks for the answer to the question, reasonably enough, in the foetus itself: when does it become a person? or at least a human being? when does it first develop a brain? consciousness? He takes issue with Warnock because at fourteen days there is nothing like a nervous system to be seen. Yet perhaps we should be asking not what sort of foetuses, but what sort of humanity, should survive. A baby may, as Harris argues, not be a "person", but anyone who did not feel a repugnance at the thought of using it for experimentation would rightly be considered depraved. That feeling extends to the late foetus, and though the strength of the feeling diminishes as we go further back, it does so gradually, not by fits and starts. Where it fades out altogether is not a matter on which further neurological research will ever decide.

At the outset of his book, Harris asks the fundamental question why we should value a human life at all. His answer, in brief, is that we should value it because the holder of that life is capable of valuing it. Perhaps those who are not ready with a better answer ought not to criticize those who are brave enough to make the attempt, but it seems to me that there are many problems with this from the outset. For one thing, try removing the indefinite article: not why should we value a human life? but why should we value human life? The answer now seems to be because we are capable of so doing, a mystical answer which is no more compelling than the contention that we should despise human life because we are capable of so doing. Then why should capacity for self-value be the basis of value? Because if I value myself and you don't, I will lose by it, so that there are prudential reasons for our behaving as though we valued one another's lives. But is that why we value human life? Then, what about those things we value which have no way of valuing themselves? And let us gloss over, as Harris himself does, the difficulties of actually determining which creatures do value themselves.

For a utilitarian such as Harris, maximizing years and minimizing suffering are absolute aims. He explicitly avoids the question why we value life, preferring to rest with the fact that we do so; but implicitly he accepts certain irreducible conditions for enjoying it. It is a familiar experience that in aiming to preserve something, we end by destroying the qualities for which we prized it; if Harris does not know what it is that we value in life, he cannot know at what cost to such qualities it is right to maximize the number and length of lives.

What in practice often feel like moral issues in medicine turn on questions of dignity or respect; length of life and the relief of pain merely happen to be more accessible criteria (sometimes excluding all others). It is a paradox that a book called *The Value of Life* ends

by leaving the reader with the sensation that its author has no idea what actually makes life valuable. There is a sense in which its author seems to know the price – the cost – of everything, and the value of nothing. What it is about life that we value may be difficult to describe, let alone quantify, but that is not a good reason for leaving it out.

In practice, Harris appeals to values beyond happiness. He concurs with the view that oblivious happiness is not to be preferred to the relatively troublesome consciousness of normal human beings. But why not? If it is relief of suffering we are worried about, why do we not feel happy about "happy pills"? Nothing in this theoretical scheme will give the clue. Why is it not positively immoral of the Government to permit sex outside marriage, if by making it illegal it might discourage a practice which may increase the incidence of cervical cancer, the transmission of painful and dangerous diseases, and the resulting risk of death and deformity in children? A drastic infringement of personal freedom, undoubtedly; but what is there in Harris's terms that makes freedom so much more valuable than the cost in lives and suffering? Is not the answer an intuitive one, of the form that we just do not want to live in a world where such and such is the case? And if so, why not apply these arguments elsewhere? Ultimately, why treat life and health as the ultimate thing?

It is not just in medical ethics that the awkward questions get neglected. Medical practice provides some good examples. It is easier not to hear something a patient is telling you because it is impossible to fit it into any known clinical picture, or because it is something about which little can be done, or because, though important enough to the patient, it is something a doctor's training leaves him ill-adapted to handle. Similarly, a writer's philosophy or his style becomes the focus of critical attention because these are easier to discuss than the elusive subtleties which actually constitute his greatness; and since these professional schemes for dealing with people or works of art are self-consistent, doubts must trickle in from elsewhere – which takes us back to the heart and guts.

Putting the ultimate value on avoiding suffering or death cannot be right. When every last ancient house in the country has been disfigured and broken up to minimize the risk of fire, all dangerous sports have been banned, only hardened criminals drink wine, and every mountain precipice has been carefully railed off to make it safe for the family, we will feel that we have acted in accordance with moral imperatives. In reality we will have robbed life of much of its meaning, and it will be a world in which I do not want to live. How as a utilitarian does one know what weight to attach to honour or dignity when weighing them in the balance against life-saving, with which they may often conflict? Knowing good from bad is not the product of argument, but the product of living.

James Rachels's book *The End of Life* is a plea, in itself reasonable, for voluntary euthanasia; yet the stratagems by which he aims to establish his case display, to my way of thinking, the weaknesses of the kind of utilitarianism both he and Harris espouse. The concern is with deeds only, not with their doers. Rachels is, in particular, anxious to "debunk" three distinctions which have been important in medical thinking: between intending and not intending (to kill), between using ordinary and extraordinary means (to keep someone alive), and between action and inaction (killing and letting die). His way of "debunking" the first turns out to be by reducing the matter to a triviality, banishing the agent from the description of the act, so that there is no moral import. Yet if we have a blazing row in the middle of which you drop to the floor, whereupon I set about flumping you in the elbow, it matters whether I am trying to kill you, or in the belief that you have had a heart attack, to save your life. Equally, there is a felt difference between aiming to comfort and aiming to kill, even if the one injection of morphine might produce either effect.

The second distinction, says Rachels, is untenable because "we must already have decided whether the use of the treatment is a good thing before we can answer the question of whether the treatment is extraordinary".



But every life that is saved is saved at a cost, and it is equally true that we cannot decide that a treatment is a good thing until we know its cost to the patient in terms of pain and prolonged suffering, and to others who might have benefited from a different deployment of resources.

Of the third issue, killing and letting die, Rachel makes short work. "Killing is wrong", he writes, "because it puts an end to one's biological life. . . . But notice that exactly the same can be said about letting someone die" (Rachel's italics). And exactly the same, one might add, can be said about dying, but that does not make it morally wrong; for it is not the consequence, a shortened life, that is wrong (however unfortunate), but the intention of bringing it about.

There are four principal ways of describing our actions in this respect: killing, saving, letting die and letting live. Our intentions (or lack of intentions) can also be described in four ways: we can intend to do something, not intend to do it, intend not to do it, and not intend not to do it. Thus there are at least sixteen ways of describing our intentions, or lack of them, in respect of another person's life, and in my view they represent sixteen different categories of "mind" one may have on the question—though they may, of course, overlap. Two points concern Rachel's argument. The first is this: "I intend not to let you die", like "I intend to save you", is a strong claim, and quite different from "I intend not to kill you" (or "I intend to let you live"); and if you were in mortal danger, your opinion of me and of my moral worth would differ according to which intention I expressed. Further, while it is true that any principle blindly adhered to will lead to many absurdities and misjudgments, a man who made it his invariable intention always to save everyone that it lay within his power to save, and never to let them die, would be a self-important busybody, hurrying about doing endless harm—morally a very different person from someone whose equally invariable intention was never to kill but always to let people live. This suggests that "killing" and "letting die" cannot be treated as morally equivalent.

The second point is this: the absence of an intention not to do something is clearly different from the intention to do it. I may never have formulated the intention not to go hang-gliding, but this is a very different state of mind from that of someone who has formulated the intention to go hang-gliding and is standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon waiting to jump off. Thus even if the intention not to save were morally the same as the intention to kill it still would be truly one of the intention not to save, a vivid mental state quite different from the relatively foggy one of not intending to save. It may be argued that if a man does not intend to save, he kills none the less, but it cannot be argued that he *intends* to kill. Since the morality of his act depends on his intentions, they are different moral states. In some cases it might have been better if he had, after all, intended to kill, but that merely confirms the moral difference.

It may be objected that it thus becomes in someone's moral interests not to formulate intentions; but the intention not to formulate intentions is itself an intention. So, the objection might continue, is it chance—whether or not you have been forced by circumstance to formulate an intention on the matter or not—that makes the difference? I would not flinch from this conclusion. In the first place, this sort of chance is an inescapable element in morality anyway—the wrongness of not saving a drowning child depends on whether you happen, by chance, to hear the splash. In the second place, the moral issue seems to be what sort of person you are—and this will be prior to whether you have the opportunity to demonstrate it in any one case. And though it may be repugnant to some that chance should play any part in morality, it is less repugnant than the alternative conclusion that there is no difference between killing and letting die, with its implication that there is no difference between the sort of person who fails to give to Oxfam and the man who sends them the famous food parcel containing a poisoned Danish pastry.

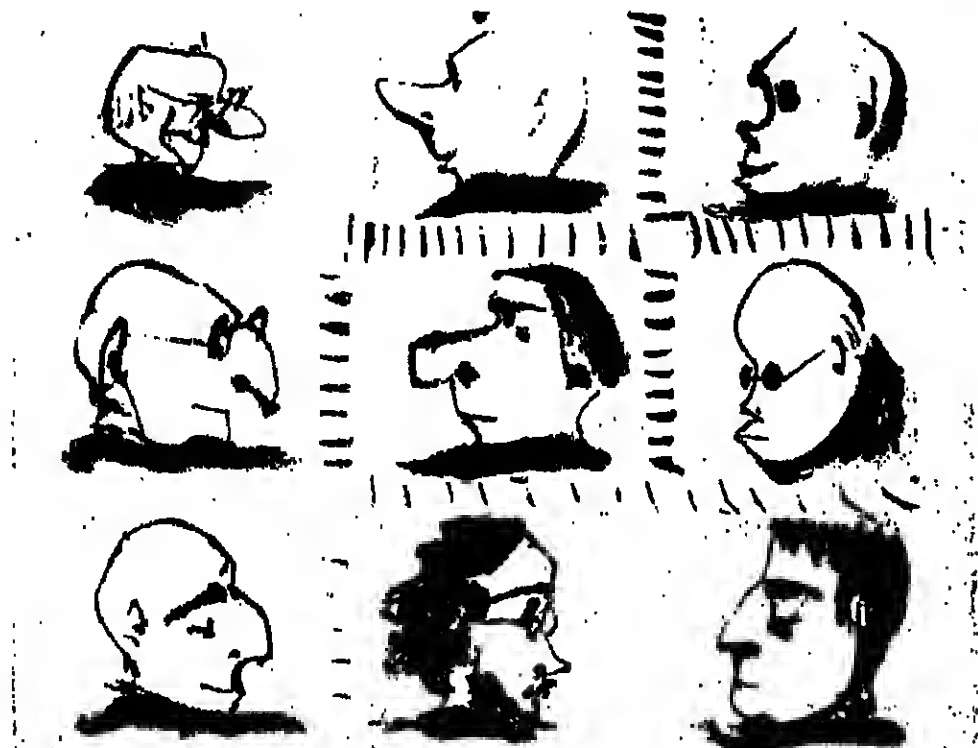
The issue of killing and letting die is complicated, and Rachel's dismissals are not commensurate with our experience of that complexity. Undoubtedly much suffering is caused

because of the preference for letting die, and doctors may sometimes help to support a hopeless though painful existence for many months without anyone, least of all the patient, desiring it, when they could bring about a speedier and less painful death by killing. Whether or not there is a utility in having a principle (and indeed a law) of not killing, which might outweigh such cases of suffering, is another matter; but the deduction which is to be drawn from such problematic cases need not be that there is, after all, no difference between letting die and killing. It might be that in such cases killing was simply better than letting die: further evidence of their lack of moral equivalence.

One book which aims to convince us that killing often is better is *Vehement Euthanasia*, edited by two of the cause's most tireless advocates, A. B. Downing and Barbara Smoker. Its

title is the whole thrust of medicine is "the support of enfeebled, and coercion of outrageous, nature", and that in a sense man has already taken upon himself the task of deciding who shall live. But the benign nature of this abrogation comes more in question when one finds a doctor—in this case, Christiana Barnard—writing, in a revealing image, of some imagined patient, denied the right to die, crying out "in a loud voice 'My doctor, my doctor, why hast thou forsaken me?'"

Inevitably intuition will play an important part in this debate. Prudence counsels against the hazards that legalizing euthanasia would bring, and it is true that we cannot make sure calculations of worth or dignity, pain or sorrow. But calculations are not what we need. Antony Flew, a pro-euthanasia contributor, ends his piece by insisting, with J. S. Mill, that



Nine caricatures from a series of twelve by Picasso; they are reproduced from *The Musée Picasso, Paris: Paintings, papers, collés, picture reliefs, sculptures, ceramics* by Marie-Laure Bernad-Bernard, Michèle Richet and Hélène Seckel (315 pp., Thames and Hudson, £25.00/30.00/34.00).

subtle, *Experts debate the right to die*, ingeniously exposes the disingenuousness of its conception: a debate, but one which, we note, already assumes its conclusion, the right to die. Of the sixteen essays contributed, only two are opposed to voluntary euthanasia, and both are immediately followed by replies. On the other hand, those two essays probably cover most of the arguments against. Yale Komisar, arguing on utilitarian lines, stresses the risks: for example that consent may not be effective, that the diagnosis may be wrong, that subsequent medical advances might have cured the disease, that there is a slippery slope to loss of desirable practices. To these points his fellow-lawyer, Glanville Williams, returns not unsmilingly, though none the less convincing replies. Luke Gormally, on the other hand, takes a non-utilitarian stand against the very idea of euthanasia, arguing that pain, misery and dependence cannot do the "worthwhileness of life" which can only rightly be ended if death is somehow deserved. Perhaps the only sort of answer to this is a passionate statement of belief such as Barbara Smoker gives here in reply. It is certainly good for us to be shaken out of a simple view that we can make an accurate calculation of the worthwhileness of a human life: we can't, and we may always be wrong, whether about our own or others' lives. But is it really more important to be certain than to act with compassion in the hope that one is right? And I find it hard to accept Gormally's views that there can be no such thing as loss of human dignity, and that suffering is always spiritual. Another contributor describes patients who "swallow Kleenex to suffocate themselves, or jork tubes out of their noses or veins, in a cat-and-mouse game of life and death which is neither merciful nor meaningful."

The classic death-bed scene, with its loving partings and solemn last words, is practically a thing of the past. In its stead is a sodated, comatose, botched object, manipulated and subordinated.

On the other hand, there is much that should continue to trouble us about the enthusiasm for euthanasia. It is easy to agree with Sydney

morality should not be "left in the domain of vague feeling or inexplicable internal conviction, but should be made a matter of reason and calculation". One can't help feeling that this is the sort of view you end by holding if you are a walking encyclopedia at the age of three.

It is worth returning for a moment to Horrie's book, for his treatment of euthanasia raises an issue of general importance. He quickly brushes the old problems aside as a trivial distraction from the real concern—"the quite extraordinarily comprehensive" government euthanasia programme. You haven't heard of it? Well, isn't it true that funding for renal dialysis and transplant, or for open-heart surgery, is not limitless? A "sinister covert euthanasia" he calls it, but by his own argument, is it not mass murder, perhaps comparable with one of the more appalling war atrocities? Later we learn that trying to persuade your wife to continue carrying your baby is rape, that vetting foster parents—or gay parents—before entrusting children to them is discrimination (natural parents are not vetted), and that if you have reservations about abortion, you are committed to believing that all possible children should be conceived, where necessary by force. This last is not *reductio ad absurdum*, but a sort of intellectual slapstick, the philosopher's equivalent of lobbing a custard pie. Apparently it makes no difference how old the fetus is, or whether the mother was raped, or the child deformed; instead of a flexible response based on the human variables—the development of the fetus and the suffering of the mother—we have a sort of Catholicism in reverse.

The position which both Harris and Rachel take to different degrees adopts no account of the given state of things. Yet how far to acquiesce in the given state of things is the quintessential problem of medical practice, and to say that actual circumstances should be ignored and only possible outcomes considered will add little to human wisdom or happiness. It is difficult to resist the view that a greater responsibility attaches to those who

bring about a state of affairs than to those who do nothing to see it, once established, reversed. And Harris himself switches in and out of this belief; for example, we are assured that there can be no objection to furnishing gay or single parents with children, since "we do not compulsorily remove children from the care of a nursing parent when one partner has died". Yet four pages earlier we had learnt that a handicapped child's life, though worth living, was not worth bringing to life. Impeccable prejudices, peccable arguments.

*The Value of Life* is a systematic treatment of philosophical issues confronting doctors, written for their enlightenment. None of the other books under review attempts its scope. *Moral Dilemmas in Modern Medicine*, being a collection of essays by different hands, lacks comparable unity; this may be part of its strength. Three of the essays in it are actually by doctors and one is by a lawyer; it is worth noticing the subjects they choose. While it is perfectly true that cryogenics will, as Harris points out, face us with some vexatious dilemmas, other theoretically less complex issues may often pose more humanly desperate conflicts: issues of truth-telling, of autonomy and of consent—those in fact which owe least to the "modesty" in medical practice. Lockwood, who is a philosopher, goes further.

Pursuing the relation between brains and persons, he examines the case of the teletransporter put into service by some Freddie Laker of the future. This would take a digital record of every molecule in your body, and transmit it to your destination, where it would form the basis for a perfect reconstruction from a "molecular bank". Unfortunately, according to Lockwood, this would not be you, a fact made explicit by the thought that the "real you" might be left by accident still wandering around London, rather than dematerializing as planned. From this he deduces that a "human being cannot be me unless he has my brain, or at any rate some crucial part of my brain". This looks like bad news for Lockwood, who at the molecular level cannot be said to have the same brain now that he had when he wrote that paper. Surely personhood must consist in the relationship between things rather than in things themselves, in the score, to adopt a musical metaphor, rather than the performance?

The lawyer is Ian Kennedy and his subject is Mrs Victoria Gillick. His paper was written in the wake of the Court of Appeal decision, against which he inveighs, and in anticipation of the ruling of the House of Lords. His approach illuminates the fascinating ambivalence of the lawyer's attitude to consistency. Not for him the philosophical attempt to follow it out to the bitter end; here he is, instead, hopping on the train of an argument when it seems to be taking him somewhere he wants to go, and hopping off it again when he needs to take a connection going somewhere else. This is, after all, the best way to use a train: know where you want to go before you start. Surely he accepts that while it may be consistent to hold that a girl who is too young to consent to intercourse is too young to consent to coitus, "It ignores the well-recognized fact that sexual intercourse will still take place, coitus or no".

Law is both in one sense more rigid than the moral philosophy to which it may be a counterpart—it hoods cut-off points and firm principles—and in another sense less so: it is re-interpreted by a process that recognizes the intuitively reasonable. Peter Skegg's book *Law, Ethics, and Medicine* treats of four main areas: of law in its application to medical practice; of abortion, consent, euthanasia and the use of organs after death. Kennedy's consideration of consent are part of a picture which is fully lucidly and economically delineated here by Skegg, and again the consent of minors is especially problematic. In the chapter on euthanasia, Skegg further investigates the distinction which is upheld in law, between action and omission; though here, as elsewhere, a omission appears that in practice other principles may override. In the first place, there is the appeal to regular medical practice: usage, as in the guano, establishes a presumption in its favour. But this principle, according to Skegg, is itself subject to a further restraint, that of the "reasonable" doctor's practice. The distinction is important. While the first is decided by

the profession alone, the second is only partly a matter of what doctors themselves think: it is as much a matter of what the jury think they should think. In this way a change of view in the population at large is subtly picked up by the law without further cumbersome intervention by anything more than the intuitions of ordinary men.

The relationship between law and ethics is not a one-way affair. In *Physicians, Law, and Ethics*, Carleton B. Chapman suggests that medical ethics, as anything more than a self-protecting medical code, has come into being only during this century, and that the impetus for this change comes largely from the growth and development of malpractice law, along with the technological advances that have focused public attention on issues such as the management of scarce resources and euthanasia. The ethical effects of malpractice law are, to say the least, ambiguous: is it moral progress that, as a result of the litigation to which Chapman refers, doctors in the US are compelled to over-investigate their patients, while the cost of treatment has soared? One in five obstetricians in the US has reportedly given up practising rather than continue to face the consequences of such litigation. A transition from the present fault, to a no-fault, system would indeed be a genuine ethical advance, one for which Chapman is enthusiastic. The adoption of the New Zealand experiment, whereby the

government itself provides protection against economic loss from accidental injury to the person, regardless of cause, may in time prove to be an example of ethical revolution brought about by change in the law.

One of the contributors to Lockwood's book of essays discusses professional secrecy, and its effect on patients: "Of course they wouldn't say, especially if things were bad", an elderly woman says as she returns from her visit to the outpatient clinic, "they've got that Oath, haven't they?" That Oath, the history of which Chapman traces in some detail, has precious little to do with ethics in the modern sense, but in Chapman's view no sort of code can suffice: "methods of moral thought are not the same as moral wisdom", and the mastering of theoretical ethics is no prerequisite for justice. Such things are the product of educated judgment and experience, which is why he is, in his urbane way, pessimistic about the manner in which education comes to doctors.

More pessimistic still than Chapman is Donald Gould, whose book *The Black and White Medicine Show: How doctors fill and serve their customers* is obviously designed to create a few ripples in and out of the professional pond. Gould is, as well as a doctor, a journalist, and his book, a trailer for which appeared in the *Daily Mirror* around publication time, doesn't get behind the stereotypes, and perhaps doesn't aim to: this is a world

where "barons" have "coffers", where our Lords and Masters tend to do things "in their infinite wisdom". It sometimes reads like Duff Sparr rewritten in the style of the "Dear Bill" column: an indictment delivered from the metaphysical equivalent of the nineteenth-century medical establishment, and that is medicine outside the establishment, as represented by non-"orthodox" treatments of every kind, from psychotherapy to acupuncture. Not, then, despite its swashbuckling approach, a revolutionary book, above all in that it says nothing new. Yet it would be a pity if it were ignored. Gould's messages may be familiar, but they are not in much danger of being heeded: the under-funding of primary health care, the waste of resources in fashionable extravaganzas, the failure to respond adequately to mental illness, the invidious power of the drug companies, the oppressive hierarchies opposed to every change.

The implications of this for all of us are fairly grim. The one bright vision he conjures up, of the health centre of the future, where the no longer ideal GP would rejoice in a magnificent array of facilities, diagnostic, therapeutic and recreational, designed as much to promote health as to treat disease, is immensely attractive, but it sounds like wishful thinking. There just isn't enough money.

A health service gets the doctors it deserves. At the moment it wants them cheap; that is, "educated" as swiftly as possible, and then working all their waking hours. With the ox-

## Sans the "x" factor

Roy Porter

KENNETH J. CARPENTER  
*The History of Scurvy and Vitamin C*  
288pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.  
0521 32029 1

The history of scurvy should have been short and sweet: from the time of Vasco da Gama onwards, it was common knowledge that once ships on trans-oceanic voyages had been at sea for a couple of months, sailors would start going down with tell-tale symptoms: spongy gums and a loosening of the teeth which made eating impossible, foul breath, stiff joints, inflammation, purple blotches, acute soreness of the skin, and extreme enervation culminating in death. It was quickly found, however, that this disease, scurvy (scorbutus to learned physicians, "scurby" to Tudor mariners), would disappear like a miracle, on landfall, once its victims had eaten heartily of oranges, lemons, limes, or other fresh fruit or vegetables.

Why, then, wasn't this the conquest of scurvy? Why didn't physicians recognize that such foodstuffs contained some essential dietary ingredient (an "x" factor eventually to be called vitamin C), and so put paid to the disease for good? Why didn't armies, fleets and expeditions automatically thereafter load up with fruit and vegetables? Why did people go on suffering from scurvy till the present century?

These are the important questions posed, and intelligently answered, in Kenneth Carpenter's well-researched and clear-headed survey. The real point is that historically things were never that simple. For one thing, open-minded clinicians over the centuries were forced to admit that no copper-bottomed cause and effect appeared to obtain between the presence or absence of scurvy and particular items of diet. After all, Eskimos ate no fruit or vegetables yet escaped the disease. And in any case, voyages were self-provisioned with lemon or lime juice, often succumbed (we would now say that its active properties had been destroyed by processing and storage).

Faced with such complexities, medicine understandably had to reach for a deeper grasp of scurvy within wider theories of health and disease. Early physicians saw its affinities to melancholy, and ascribed it to defects of the spleen. Foul air, and sea air in particular, were often pinpointed, as were poor hygiene and bad food. Eighteenth-century physicians commonly attributed it to blocked perspiration or to putrefying matter in the gut—a notion discredited by later theories that body toxins, in the Pasteurian era, bacteria were responsible.

And as each of these hypotheses came and went, of course, they brought their own preferred remedy with them, from elder, sauerkraut, malt, pickles or soda-water, to the late nineteenth-century trust in purified canned rations. Pragmatic commanders like Nelson, concerned for their men, kept fruit with fruit—between 1795 and 1815, the Admiralty issued 1.6 million gallons of lemon juice. Unfortunately, however, the latest advances in nutritional science all too often proved wide of the mark: at the turn of this century Sir Almoth Wright blamed under-alkalinity of the blood, and so judged citrus fruits positively harmful.

Yet, as Carpenter rightly stresses, it would be foolish for the historian to condemn theorizing about scurvy *per se*, not least because our own understanding of the relations between the disease and vitamin C derives from a theory of "deficiency diseases", developed this century through the pioneering work of Frederick Gowland Hopkins, Casimir Funk, E. V. McCollum and others. Previously, it was what you ate that made you ill; now it was what you didn't eat.

Our own theories carry great weight because they are backed by sophisticated controlled experiments: it was, after all, the systematic feeding of guinea-pigs with unbalanced diets which led to the formulation of the very notion of vitamin. Over 200 years ago, the Scottish naval surgeon, James Lind, pioneer navy doctor, attempted the first controlled experiments regulating the diets of scurvy sailors. He divided his sufferers into six groups, dosing each for a fortnight with quite distinct anti-scorbutics—cider, sulphuric acid, vinegar and so forth. Some had no beneficial effect, but by contrast, "oranges and lemons were the most effectual remedies for this distemper at sea". Lind's promising results were never adequately followed up. Why nutritional experimentation of this kind lagged for so long deserves fuller study.

These and many other matters are expertly sifted here, and Professor Carpenter is characteristically generous but judicious towards the work of earlier scholars in the field. Not least, he offers the layman a clear account of the rapid progress of the chemical analysis and synthesis of ascorbic acid between the wars, above all in the researches of the Professor Albert von Szent-Györgyi, who recently died aged ninety-three. By surveying the transformation of vitamin C from dietary supplement to putative wonder drug (especially in the exorbitant claims of Linus Pauling), Carpenter demonstrates that the old dialectic of theory and experience, ignorance and hope, all under the shadow of disease and death, remains the condition within which medical research must proceed.

## The care business

Charles Webster

DANIEL M. FOX  
*Health Policies, Health Politics: The British and American experience 1911-1965*  
233pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.  
£16.80.  
0691 047332

Although modest in length, this book is ambitious in scope. Daniel Fox has not only produced a well-documented and original history of health care in both Britain and the United States, he also gives us a polished review of the literature, and finally unveils the first full application of a new historiographical approach.

Fox contends that most earlier accounts of the modern health service are limited because of their concentration on the emergence of collectivist forms of health care. In his view this value-laden approach has deflected attention away from more significant secular trends. He himself attaches greater importance to developments common to all major Western systems, many of which can be related to the instinctive maximization of the benefits of medical advance.

Fox identifies "hierarchical regionalism" as the guiding principle in the formation of modern health policy. Its impact is particularly evident in the hospital field, which suits his case well because of its increasing dominance in Western medicine. Fox's case for hierarchical regionalization is also strengthened by similarities in the pattern of its emergence in Britain and the United States, regardless of those countries' very different political and administrative climates.

Notwithstanding his infectious enthusiasm, Fox is not entirely convincing, at least with respect to the British case. He neglects some helpful evidence, and pays insufficient attention to certain awkward problems. His chronology of epistemological change is by no means easy to follow and is not likely to stand up to criticism. Fox belongs to the "consensus" school of political theory, but he is too ready to elicit the emergence of consensus, with the result that subsequent failures in its consolidation require false-saving references to "conflict within consensus". His readers are not likely to agree that some deep-seated consensus exists on ends, in situations where deep divisions exist over means. In his distaste for ideology Fox is perhaps too easily carried along by the recent fashion of underpinning party-political and medical-political divisions in the field of health care. The political traumas surrounding

potential increase in our understanding, especially at the molecular level, of processes in almost every field of medical knowledge, with the rapid evolution of whole new sciences such as immunology, and the fascinating implications which they yield for our understanding of disease, let alone the immense body of information with which doctors were already required to acquaint themselves during their training, there is very little time to think, let alone to educate oneself. Indeed, in the present hospital régime those who succeed will have to have mastered the secret of St John the Dwarf, who was reportedly able to go many years without food or sleep. Normal human relations are something you might read about in novels, if you had the time to read novels. I have in fact heard a consultant advise a group of students that they would learn much about human nature from the study of literature—sound advice which, in the circumstances of the 1980s, is a bit like extolling the virtues of world travel to an unmurdered mother of eight.

The education and experience that doctors have will help shape their intuitions, and whether we approve of it or not, their intuitions will help shape our lives. Must practising doctors will not have time, and may not have the inclination, to read any of the books here under review. Yet intuitions do not improve by being kept unopened. There is a place for argument in ethics. Its value is not demonstrated by vanquishing intuition; good arguments lead not to conclusions, but to beginnings. Heroic beginnings as good as any.

National Health Insurance and the National Health Service cannot be dismissed simply as minor bouts of billiousness.

Fox argues that the principles of hierarchy and regionalism were widely accepted by 1918 and strongly entrenched by 1930. Wartime planning for the post-war Welfare State is presented as their natural consolidation. He overstates the initial receptivity to regionalism among planners, and does not do justice to the drift away from regionalism during the Second World War. After all, regionalism was ignored in the coalition government's NHS White Paper of 1944, and planners were by no means enthusiastic about its reintroduction. Arguably, the whole tenor of health service planning between 1918 and 1946 was based on the existing local authority structure, with minimal concessions being made to joint board arrangements and then only when strictly necessary. The forces of inertia in local government stood firmly in the way of regionalism.

The regional hospital system established under the NHS supplies Fox with his most conclusive evidence. Yet his treatment of the NHS is also deficient in certain significant respects. In practice it does not provide a conclusive illustration of the dominance of regional hierarchy, its inpartite administration has prevented the kind of unified command and rational distribution of resources advocated as long ago as the Dawson Report of 1920. No attempt was made in 1946 to rationalize either local health authorities or the family practitioner services, and they have never been effectively drawn into the regional hierarchy. Neither does the regional hospital structure adopted between 1948 and 1974 fit Fox's case completely. He says too little about the mechanics of the hospital system. For instance, he should have considered the impact of separating the teaching from the regional hospitals in England and Wales, or the adoption of a non-territorial basis for regional subdivision, which created a chaos of management committees, not swept away until 1974. The NHS legislation created confusion over the relationship between the Ministry of Health, the region and group authorities, with the result that hierarchy was almost impossible to sustain, and ministers have always oscillated between strengthening and abolishing regional authorities. Finally, regionalism in Scotland deserved attention not only on grounds of completeness, but also because it materially affects Fox's argument.

But if Fox's thesis is open to objection on these and other grounds, his book is none the less informative, challenging and constructive.



## To the letter

### John Clute

**HARRY MATTHEWS**  
*The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium*  
 199pp. Paladin. Paperback. £3.50.  
 0 58618574 2

Harry Matthews's third novel, *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium*, first appeared in serial form in the *Paris Review* almost fifteen years ago. Carcanet made this extraordinary and beguiling post-Modernist fable available as a separate volume last year (1979pp, £8.95. 0 85635 572 1) and it now reappears in paperback.

It is not an easy book to begin to read, though it becomes almost impossible to put down. Its difficulty, which lies in its language, eventually becomes its delight. With far more grace and concision than John Barth's *Letters* (1979), *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium* tests to breaking point the conventions of the epistolary novel. Zachary McCatex, an American living in a baroque fever-dream of Florida, writes to his wife, Twang Panutnpaan, who is engaged in covert research for him in Italy. She writes in reply. Ornate, parasitic, obtuse, fat and gullible, Zachary is easy to understand from the start, though his dabblings in certain secret societies becomes, at times, impossibly recondite. Twang, on the other hand, as a native of Pan-Nam, an Asian land once colonized by Italy, boasts an English of delicious instability. "When 't's the erth's scisors u's", she writes to Zachary of their separation, "ny all-erth is

slop (misiry), such misiry me wun huc-en vin, I'm simillar I am eating a horsep." There are dozens of pages of this. At first it seems incomprehensible, a joke about the nature of the epistolary novel that Matthews simply takes too far. But slowly Twang's English begins to improve; her diction becomes increasingly deft, poetic, worldly-wise; she becomes the heart of the book. But as her words become clear, *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium* darkens into seeming lunacy.

Twang and Zachary are on the trail of buried treasure, which they believe has been smuggled centuries before from Medici Italy to hidden burial somewhere off the western coast of Florida. In a steely counterpoint, as letters dismistrously cross one another, the plot thickens with rococo finesse. Twang's antiquarian researches match like puns the daft arcana of the secret society Zachary has entangled himself with. He has been duped. Appearances become impossibly confusing. (The reader will be helped, as well as being reminded of the self-referring textuality of the text, by the convenient index which appears at the end of the volume.) Finally, in a wholly delightful fashion, the book ends by swallowing its own tale. Without revealing how, it might be noted that Matthews's title is an acronym for SOS.

At the end, there is nothing left but the letter. *SOS* is a play on words, and ultimately about nothing but itself. But, like words made flesh, both Zachary and Twang exhibit an astonishing vitality, and infuse the book they inhabit with human joy. There is a text to remember.

## Sense-makers

### Aima Vaux

**DOUGLAS GLOVER, KRISTEN HEMMERICH, DEIRDRE MADDEN, DEDORAH MOFFATT, DOROTHY NIMMO, JACI STEPHEN**  
*First Fictions: Introduction*  
 255pp. Faber. Paperback. £3.95.  
 0 571 13607 9

Since it consists almost entirely of interruptions, digressions and excuses, it is somewhat surprising that anything in Douglas Glover's "Dog Attempts to Drown Man in Saskatoon" makes any sense at all. None the less, it is a coherent and cleverly constructed piece which starts off as a story about why the narrator and his wife decided to separate, but ends up a story about the impossibility of explaining either cause or effect. In fact, the narrator uses his discursiveness to turn the account of a run-of-the-mill series of events leading to divorce into a semi-philosophical debate on the sense-making structures of narrative itself. Although occasionally heavy-handed (Glover never misses an opportunity to signpost what he is doing), this fairly erudite wit is a nice touch in a volume devoted to writers who on the whole prefer not to play games with their readers, and take for granted the coherence of a form that not all of them are comfortable with.

There are some sparks of comedy in Jaci Stephen's psychoanalytical charade "Blood Relations": when a young girl, well versed in the laws of Freudian symbolism, tries to preempt her own analysis. It is a joke that has been made before, but Stephen plays with it as such, using the old jokes as new weapons in a peculiar battle of wits that is never quite resolved. She is less dexterous in avoiding the obvious in her second story here, "The Other Side of Summer". Laden with religious markers, it traces the narrator's changing relationship with a woman who is obsessed with building a wall. Part of the problem is that what is comic in "Blood Relations" is used seriously here, and, having laughed before, we are not easily convinced by a crude symbolism that reaches its conclusion far too quickly.

Hurried revelation, in fact, is the downfall of many of these stories. The much-loved uncovering of a hidden reality beneath the familiar frequently proves difficult to handle. The exception is Deirdre Madden's beautifully written novella "Hidden Symptoms", the story of three Belfast characters who find "too much reality . . . hard to bear". Madden is more concerned with how the truth is hidden than

with how it is revealed. Indeed, for her suffering protagonist Theresa, art has nothing to do with revelation at all, but is part of a general process of mystification carried out by the intelligentsia to justify their elitism to themselves. As Madden's chief means of disclosure, however, the dialectic of art and reality is more than just a moral issue, and abstract argument proves as central to personal identity as the dilemmas it is seen to obscure. Written with a maturity that is rare in this volume, "Hidden Symptoms" is a serious and impressive story; and Madden's language bristles with the frustrations and deceptions of her characters.

*First Fictions* is not a coherent collection, nor is it meant to be, but as a showcase for young writers it is surprisingly uniform. Themes recur and difficulties repeat themselves. Too often complexity becomes ambivalent, simplicity banal, and stylistic daring (though not a great feature) is bought at the cost of substance.

## Front-line fantasies

### Carol Kino

**M. J. FITZGERALD**  
*Rape Dancer*  
 158pp. Picador. Paperback. £2.95.  
 0 330 29200 5

While male authors get to travel the wide world for material, women get stuck at home with the emotions. That's the commonplace, at least, and *Rapedancer*, M. J. Fitzgerald's first collection of stories, begins by seeming no exception. These mostly fantastic tales of love and sexuality are thick with that battleground's well-worn themes (struggle of wills, games, loss of self, entrapment); with men and women wearing victrol/victim hats a la Jean Rhys. Some of the stories, particularly those that purport to be about "real" situations, aren't entirely successful. "Perspective on the First You", for instance, the memoir of a first affair, seems only a step away from the journal. And the nasty chess match of "The Game", where a young girl learns to beat an old man for the winner's "treat" in the bedroom, looms too obviously as a symbol.

Fitzgerald is at her best when she lets go of the world completely and creates an alternative reality based on metaphor and symbol. In "Falling Sick", a girl falls, repeatedly, from her high balcony for an alluring man in the crowd below, who is never there to catch her. In "Creases", a man's dandruff is his love life

## In and out of the boue

### Jill Neville

**COLIN MACINNES**  
*To the Victors the Spoils*  
 350pp. Allison and Busby. £9.95 (paperback).  
 04.951.  
 0850316707  
*All Day Saturday*  
 162pp.  
 0701210125  
*June in Her Spring*  
 192pp.  
 0701205987  
 Hogarth Press. Paperback. £3.50 each.  
 England, Half English  
 208pp. Hogarth Press. Paperback. £3.95.  
 0701205970  
**GRAHAM MCINNES**  
*Humping My Bluey*  
 223pp. Hogarth Press. Paperback. £3.95.  
 0701205946

"Takes you into the searing world of coffee bars, motor scooters and jazz clubs", gasps the blurb on an old paperback edition of *Absolute Beginners* by Colin MacInnes. We smile at that dated innocence, but the novel does not date much, though irrepressibly innocent and fizzy with youthful invincibility. Hence the recent film, and reissues this year of all MacInnes's "London" novels, *City of Spades*, *Absolute Beginners* and *Mr Love and Justice*, in an omnibus edition from Allison and Busby (£12; paperback, £6.95) and in Penguin (£2.50 each).

It was the attention given to the film which presumably motivated the publishers to also reissue MacInnes's lesser-known novels and his not-so-distant journalism. Of all his novels, including the three about low-life London, the best is *City of Spades*, a book so yeasty it is impossible to believe it was written by the same man who churned out *To the Victors the Spoils*, *June in Her Spring* and *All Day Saturday*. There is something lifeless about these conventional novels, despite their resolute craftsmanship. MacInnes found his voice, his creative energy and pulse only when he wrote from the heart of that boue into which his lifelong nostalgia had led him.

When Angela Thirkell went to Australia with her second husband in 1919 she brought with her her two sons from a previous marriage to the singer James Campbell MacInnes. Graham MacInnes and Colin MacInnes were so opposite in character that together (like the brothers in the Patrick White novel) they could form a "solid mandala". Colin of course was the outsider (even down to the "a" he added to

the family name). Graham, the insider, the conformist, wrote with utter naturalness about his conventional self. *The Road to Gundagai*, the story of his boyhood, has become something of a classic.

Graham's Australian boyhood was enviable, despite an embarrassingly ineffectual stepfather and a mother too exotic for Melbourne. When he brought a friend home they had to face the ogre:

Are you enjoying yourself Eric?  
 The time's just flying, Mrs. Thirkell.  
 Time flies; you cannot; they go too fast.  
 Er . . .  
*Aspicie faciem.* Come come; where's your Latin?  
 Um - I think maybe it's time.  
 Not in the least. Have some more barley water. A house full, a hole full, you cannot gather a bowl full.  
 Later . . . I heard a pal say: Is his Mum doing?  
 No, but she's a very highly educated.

Being Angela Thirkell's sons, and related to Burne-Jones, Kipling and Stanley Baldwin may have taken its toll, but it also gave the boys an *enure* into a grander milieu than their own fairly dismal home, with its undercurrents of disappointment and planned escape. Their illustrious mother did leave in the end, and Graham went to Canada to find his father. But he had fourteen years of Australian boyhood under his belt. *Humping My Bluey*, also recently reissued, continues his Australian autobiography, covering the adolescent years. His simple desire to succeed and his attitude to the girls (good and bad) of the period are described with enchanting brio and even wit. *Humping My Bluey* is so fresh there is a sea breeze faintly tinged with eucalyptus blowing on to the face of the reader: this is middle-class Melbourne "enchanted by distance, intact, before the not set in", to quote Barry Humphries's introduction to the Hogarth Press reissue.

Life turned out to be consistent in that Graham made the brilliant career he planned, culminating in his being made Canadian Ambassador to Unesco in Paris, with a successful marriage to an Australian girl. And Colin: the last time I saw him he was standing contentedly in the shadows of the French pub in Soho, with no socks on. In *All Day Saturday*, he has a portrait of a vain and melodramatic woman which could well be Angela Thirkell (but without the talent). That she desires a younger man is held up for our ridicule and his disgust. She is thirty-eight years old. This novel reads like a early effort, but was in fact the last of MacInnes's novels to be published. There are few signs of the gamey writer he could be. As a record of a fortunate section of Australian rural society in the 1920s, with its colloquialisms and local celebrations, it is an accurate enough picture; both it and *June in Her Spring*, however, have the thinness of boyish fantasy. There is little of that drenching sense of the surrounding landscape which the pages of Graham MacInnes's autobiography exude. (There is a passage in *Humping My Bluey*, in which Graham walks on top of a dangerous radio tower and sings "It Had to be You" to the prosperous sheep farms below, which turns up slightly re-worked in his brother's novel.) *June in Her Spring* contains a subplot which is a clear acknowledgement of the closet homosexuality of the period; this is remarkable in a middle-brow novel published in 1932. *To the Victors the Spoils*, for all the intelligence and even craft which have gone into it, is a dull read about mopping up after the Allies force the German Army back towards the Rhine.

When MacInnes wrote about what he loved - a dive in Soho, a ponce's flat in the East End, the consolations of jazz - the words scramble over the pages. In the hilarity of *City of Spades*, with its street fumes, its acknowledgment of what is exasperating and what is not about the Africans and West Indians who beset him, MacInnes made his *cowp*. The dialogue is a perpetual joy; as is the picture of a London boosa in it on voyages of self-exploration. The collection is uneven, but the final impression is a heady rush of language, symbolism and action - one of strength and exhilaration.

The judges of the third *Slim* magazine International Short Story Competition are Angela Carter and Jack Trevor Story. Entry forms (S.A.E. or two International Reply Coupons should be included) from *Slim* Magazine Short Story Competition, 19 Halldane Terrace, Newcastle on Tyne NE2 5AN.

## Locker-room anomie

### Christopher Hitchens

**RICHARD FORD**  
*The Sportsman*  
 381pp. Collins. £10.95.  
 000217475 X

I have a friend who finds all sport utterly null, and who edits a reasonably cerebral weekly magazine in Washington. He doesn't want the doorman and the building staff to consider him a snob, so each Monday morning he bounds in with a cheery cry of "How 'bout those Skins" (I'm not sure even now whether this salute is supposed to end in an exclamation mark or a question mark). With this formalized obeisance to our local football gladiators, the Washington Redskins, he says he gets by.

The charm of Richard Ford's narrator, Frank Bascombe, lies in the easy way that he uses sporting argot as a means of contact and exchange: a universal male idiom that can melt unease and establish common interest. He does it even though he knows it's phoney, even though politicians and other toadies do it, and even when he suspects that the other party may care as little for sport as his ingenious friend does. This is a novel about how tough it is to be a man, and Bascombe won't miss a chance to make things easier if he can help it.

Widely touted as "a novel of alienation", *The Sportsman* is more properly to be read as a protracted account of anomie. There is no "social" dimension to it - the characters are all friendless, bored, atomized and otherwise disillusioned. It is this very emptiness that they fill with chatter; often, with sports chatter. There is a peculiarly well-done passage in which a disastrous Easter lunch, bringing together friends and family in a slough of hypocrisy and embarrassment, is narrowly saved by a last-minute change of subject to the safe ground of some upcoming championship.

Many writers with keen ears find the trick of articulated dialogue a very hard one to bring off. I would say for Ford that he really catches the limited, tedious, repetitive agony of much modern American "conversation". He also shows the dull edge of menace that is concealed in the turgidity; the way that a too-often-used Christian name in a hopelessly confused sentence is often the prelude to pointless threat or insult.

Bascombe is a guy who has failed at being a husband, failed at being a writer and teacher, and may well fail of the undemanding job of sportswriting. All he really wants is to be let alone, and as a result he finds that he is unexpectedly failing even as a casual friend and a referee fornicator. The web of humanity, of

human sympathy if you prefer, needs more maintenance work than he is prepared to put in. All his "problems" arise from this ordinary shortcoming.

The reader's problems arise from the unevenness of Ford's prose. At one point, in a hotel with his newest girlfriend, Bascombe tells us:

I am hungry as an animal now, though when I rouse her with a hand on her soft shoulder, ready for a crab soufflé or a lobster cake, amenable to a la carte up on the revolving roof, she winks with a different menu in mind - one a fellow would need to be ready for the old folks' home to pass up.

A little later, he is speaking confidently of the "homiletic" response to a stirring Easter sermon. The contrast between the awful, artless, locker-room nudge in the extract above and this apparent facility is at least mildly unsettling in a "first person" novel. When you read, "Good Friday is a special day for me, apart from the other specialness", is this Ford fouling up, or Bascombe?

Much of the story hinges on Bascombe's reluctance, or refusal, to hear the confidences of a fellow divorcee who fears he may be homosexual. When this man takes his own life, he leaves a message on Bascombe's answering machine (in modern) in which he talks suddenly about *Newsweek* picture of a plane crash:

You might remember that. Frank, you can see all those people's heads in the windows looking out. It's really something. And I just can't help wondering what they must've been thinking about, since they are a bomb. A big, silver bomb.

Not long afterwards, Bascombe watches a train draw into a station, while

Trainmen lean out the silver vestibules, cycling the passing station, taking notice of the two waiting cars with workmanlike uninterest. There is another life it wouldn't like . . .

For the reasons given above, you cannot be sure if the second is intended as a semi-conscious echo of the first. But the interest of Richard Ford is that he does make you wonder in that way, and incline to award the benefit of such doubts as occur.

It turns out, ultimately, that Bascombe does care about something. He cannot get over his son's death from an unclassifiable and mystifying "syndrome", and simply doesn't want to be vulnerable to such a loss ever again. He seems half-surprised at the undramatic conclusions that result from such a determined line of reasoning; at the large number of shallow and tolerable options that are available to him. *The Sportsman*, then, is a rather well-wrought account of the rewards and punishments for letting go, and of the temptations of indifference and mediocrity. It also illustrates some of the dangers and paradoxes that attend the effort to bring these overlooked qualities to life.

## The granny of invention

### Anthony Sattin

**THOMAS SHAPCOTT**  
*Hotel Bellevue*  
 228pp. Chatto and Windus. £9.95.  
 070113131 X

This Australian novel opens with Boyd Kennedy, the central character, as a child asking his grandmother, "When you die what will you give me?" Her somewhat disguised answer is to call him "sole heir of my hopes": he inherits her appreciation of the past, which she focuses on the ageing colonial Hotel Bellevue in Brisbane, where she spent her five-day honeymoon before her husband was killed in the First World War. For Boyd the past is tied up in his grandmother's house, in the secrets of her mirrored vase, her locked bedroom. They cannot conceive of a time when either building would be developed or destroyed.

The narrative jumps between Boyd's childhood, when he travels alone from Melbourne to visit his grandmother, and later when, in his thirties, his grandmother long dead, he leaves his wife and returns to Brisbane, intending to hide in "the anonymity of a motel", but instead going straight to his grandmother's house. The children of MacInnes's *Spades* are now adult men who have gone down in the world and part of the house is rented by three "dole bludgers and two young men and a nubile girl

called Cora. When Boyd moves into the other part - his grandmother's front bedroom - it is inevitable that he will have to confront the past, as well as sort out his present.

A sense of the inevitable drives most of the characters in *Hotel Bellevue* and works against the impact of the neatly constructed narrative. The predictability is partly explained by the way Thomas Shapcott loads his descriptions, as when, for instance, Boyd describes Cora as a "spoiled daughter of someone in the professions, slumming it for a bit . . . When she got tired of the lentils and mung beans there would be a full fridge at home." By the end of the novel Cora has made peace with her father (who raped her), and he gives her a red Mazda. By the end, also, Boyd realizes that his hostility was suppressed lust. Characters are predictable, also, because they suffer well-tried psychological problems, are driven by familiar and primitive devils. Significantly, it is Boyd's wife Marie, and the characters who trace her descent into despair, who seem most effective and memorable, perhaps because they don't have to carry the main narrative. As for the hotel, it never really becomes more than a side issue and catalyst.

*Hotel Bellevue*, like Shapcott's earlier novels, especially his most successful, *White Stag of Exile*, is a vigorous and energetic piece of writing. At its centre are some serious and sensitive meditations on the past, and the price still to pay for it.

## More Tomfoolery

### David Profumo

**BOB COLEMAN**  
*The Later Adventures of Tam Jones*  
 345pp. Bodley Head. £10.95.  
 0 370 30755 0

Although it has been turned into a play, a film, a chapbook and more than one opera, *Tam Jones* has never been treated to a sequel. To attempt such a thing for your own first novel might seem a *folie de grandeur*, but Bob Coleman's book is a considerable achievement by any standards, true to the spirit and tenor of Fielding's original, and suitably racy in its own right.

When the story resumes it is May 1774, and Tam is the squire of Paradise Hall and a hit of a local hero, having emulated the active benevolence of Allworthy and settled into a prosperous routine. His beloved Sophia is dead, but he has three children - his heir, the reptilian Hacksem, a racker with designs for industrializing the estate; Rob, a chip off the old block, who drifts away to become a privateer; and the beautiful Amelia, a paragon of educated femininity. But on the eve of his forty-fourth birthday, Tam finds the letter to travel has not deserted him.

His interest in Tory politics prompts him to ship off to Maryland as secretary to the blimpish Lord Sully, whose libidinous spouse has discovered certain of our hero's undiminished abilities, but once in the colonies he becomes embroiled in the revolutionary underworld. The action shuttles easily between America and England, where, in his father's absence, Hacksem joins forces with Lwywer Sinaniore and contrives to dispossess Amelia, poison the reputation of the hamfisted Parson Adams (her admirer, and son of his more famous father) and murder the goodly Dr James, trustee of the estate.

Adams, Amelia, the doctor's widow and

Mrs Limeslices the housekeeper flee to London where they solicit the help of Dr Johnson to find Squire Jones, the villains in vigorous pursuit, egged on by the indestructible Bliff. Meanwhile, in the colonies Tam has fallen for a lustrous widow named Angela Wilson, who is active in the cause of Independence, his own rather abrupt conversion to which is motivated more by desire than by principles. The Secret Service dispatches its swaggering Captain Whipsblood to nail them both, Adams and Amelia pursue a perilous journey in his wake, and before too long everyone gets his just deserts.

Diverting as it is, Coleman's novel is no cheap skate period-piece parody, and if its eight books cannot aspire to the architectonic shapeliness of its forebear, it none the less offers a plot that is well sustained and nicely executed. Coleman manages a consistent narrative voice, cultivating the reader with authorial prefaces and choric interpolations, and the moral concerns are, to a certain extent, of a piece with Fielding's own. There is a fair amount of swiving along the road, but sexual romps are not overdone - as with the original, an impression of concupiscence is achieved without very many ladies actually being brought to bed.

If it has not the mischievous imagination of John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor*, this has at least the quality of authentic eighteenth-century pastiche, especially in the axiomatic style that is now difficult to reproduce without the tongue rupturing the cheek. Coleman's asides are often nimble and witty ("Alas! I see too late that vices are but footmen to the great coach of sorrows") and there are few anachronisms, though it might be thought that hunting ducks, lying on sidewalks, and totalling one's impressions would have been experiences less than common for most eighteenth-century Englishmen. For all that, he has cooked up an olla podrida of lustings, deceits, mystery and mayhem that should satisfy many an appetite.

## Jokes beyond belief

### Roz Kaveney

**ELLEN GALFORD**  
*The Fires of Bride*  
 229pp. Women's Press. £8.95 (paperback).  
 £2.95.  
 0 7043 5010 6

It is always risky to write a comic novel based firmly on a system of beliefs. Often the jokes will not be especially funny to those who do not share the beliefs, and at whose expense many of the jokes may accordingly be made. The only answer is to make the jokes very funny indeed, and on the whole Ellen Galford manages this - a good thing, since she is writing not only from a lesbian feminist standpoint, but also an (adoptive) Scottish Nationalist one. In the latter case, she has an exemplar to follow: Compton Mackenzie. The book is full of jokes about the half-baked intervention in the economy of the islands by sentimental American descendants of those driven from them, and about the attempts of the local minister Murdo MacNeish to impose a rigorous Calvinist morality on the place. Galford's lesbian feminism, however, prevents her from merely following her model. In contrast to Mackenzie, the men are either comic butts or more or less nonentities, and the women get the good bits of dialogue and action.

However, the coarseness of knowing that she has a captive and willing audience of the like-minded encourages a certain sentimentality in her jokes. There is a running gag in the relationship between Catriona and Maria about the Gothic fantasy that bedevils a particular sort of lesbian romantic writing; the off-hand but correct assumptions of the woman archaeologist Stoney about people's sexual avivability are a fair comment on a particular amorous style; the jokes about sentimental Scottishry could only be made by a believer. *The Fires of Bride* is a ramshackle but talented comic novel, which shows real promise of better structured and even funnier novels to come.

"If we are ever to experience in English the serious practice of narrative as the French have developed it", Frank Kermode wrote of Christine Brooke-Rose's 1975 novel *Thru*, "we shall have to attend to Christine Brooke-Rose." *Thru*, along with *Qui*, *Such* and *Between*, is now reprinted in *The Christine Brooke-Rose Omnibus: Four novels* (742pp. Carcanet. Paperback, £8.95. 0 85635 560 7). The *TLS* reviewers, while praising her writing, have often stressed its difficulty. Of *Qui* (1964), the

reviewer wrote that "the greater part of the book is concerned with the actual workings of [the hero's] mind, and this, though very ingeniously done, is exhausting . . .". The reviewer of *Such* (1966) proclaimed it "very much a book for new-novel readers, who are used to . . . hard work. It is highly inventive and highly organized." Readers new to Brooke-Rose might have appreciated an introduction, which this omnibus unfortunately lacks.



# Terminal preoccupations

Simon Rae

U.A. FANTHORPE  
Selected Poems  
124pp. Peterloo Poets. £7.50 (paperback).  
Penguin. £2.95.  
0905291751

On giving up teaching to become, in her own words, a "middle-aged drop out", U.A. Fanthorpe in fact became a clerk in a Bristol hospital. Aspects of that job are reflected in several of the poems included here from her first collection, *Side Effects* (1978). Her stance is one of sympathy for the patients, distaste for the impersonality of the hospital bureaucracy and the hierarchical chain of command from "Gud (in my case Dr Snow)" down. Poetry's role in this context is put into perspective by the turn in *Out-Patients* who produces a booklet of Patient Striving's "cosy musings" and says, "See... this is what keeps me going". "Genuine poets", as we know, do not go in for consolatory "rubbish". Peter Rending's C is unlikely to be found in many hospice libraries. While not following Reading into full documentary explicitness ("blood and fish-smelling / purplish matter" etc), Fanthorpe is uneasy about epilepsy and mental disorders, senility, and the "final symptom", death.

There is a lot of death in her poetry. She meditates on death in myth or history (the book's cover shows a detail from "Weighing of the Heart of the Scribe Ani" from his *Book of the Dead* papyrus), and she observes death—or

rather the slow and painful process of dying—at first hand. With its subtle use of Macbeth's great soliloquy and the example of Cowper who "restrained the dark / Once, as far as we know... Tomorrow and" is a moving depiction of the final stages of death by cancer, and of the strategies by which those who are to go on living have to live with the dying, "Was and will be are both uneasy ground: / Now is the safest tense. / Terminal Care rests among recipes / On the kitchen table."

Regarding what happens after death, Fanthorpe's preference is for "the hallelujahs of the triumphant dead" as against the no-nonsense practicality of modern science. While setting little store by the assurances of organized religion, Fanthorpe is fascinated by the sense that myth-making man has tried to inject into the most senseless fact of his existence. The sequence "Statues Underground", from her second book, *Standing To* (1982), explores underworlds ancient and modern, with "Rising Damp", her Arvon prize-winning poem of 1980, evoking the subterranean rivers of London — "Effra, Graveney, Falcon, Quaggy, Wandle, Walbrook, Tyburn, Fleet" — as fellows of "Phlegethon, Acheron, Lethe, Styx".

The preoccupation should not, however, be allowed to obscure Fanthorpe's healthy interest in the living world around her. There are poems celebrating gardens and gardeners, horticultural shows, canals, Ordnance Survey maps, churches, circuses, music, the theatre. Above all, she is interested in people, and this results in her frequent use of the dramatic monologue. Capturing another person's voice



Epstein's "Woman Possessed", 1932, is reproduced here from Evelyn Silber's *The Sculpture of Epstein* (239pp. Phaidon. £80. 0 7148 2262 0), which will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

convincingly is not easy, and Fanthorpe gets mixed results from the form. The four chatty, catty pieces given to women from Shakespeare's tragedies ("Only Here for the Bier") are dreadful, and at least parts of "Getting It Across" (Jesus) ring more than a little false — "Not the Prodigal Pucking Son (ngain)", the disciples are imagined as saying at one point. The three speeches by the protagonists of Uccello's "St George and the Dragon", though — "Not my best side, I'm afraid... " "It's hard for a girl to be sure if / She wants to be rescued"; "I have diplomas in Dragon / Management and Virgin Reclamation..." comprise an amusing dissection of sexual roles and attitudes.

The most ambitious of the first-person poems — and the longest — is "The Constant Tin Soldier", which is about a survivor of the West-

ern Front whose subsequent civilian life never shakes off the battlefield traumas.

Dying is easier.  
Just a flick of somebody's finger.  
Then the icy exactness of rigor mortis,  
While posthumous flies and decorations settle...

Unhappily the icy exactness of language which makes the first part of the poem so strong gives way in the second part to a blimpish, paranoid rambling which, while it is partly the point, should not have been allowed to extend over the best part of five pages. But U.A. Fanthorpe's failures testify to one of her great strengths — the courage to take risks. Her poems display a wide sympathy, a sharp eye, and an informed, critical intelligence. *Selected Poems* is a fine achievement, with the promise perhaps of even better things to come.

## Martian reinforcements

Fleur Adcock

STEPHEN ROMER  
Idols  
48pp. Oxford University Press. £3.95.  
019 281984 4  
ALAN MOORE  
Opla  
83pp. Anvil Press. £4.50.  
085646161 X  
DOUGLAS HOUSTON  
With the Official Eaters  
64pp. Bloodaxe. £3.95.  
090642770 3  
R. A. MAITRE  
Blue Barometers  
62pp. Peterloo Poets. £4.50.  
090529176 X  
RICHARD GODDEN  
Breathing Exercises  
68pp. Peterloo Poets. £4.50.  
090529173 5  
ALAN JENKINS, PETER McDONALD, JO SHAPCOTT, DOMINIC FISHER, PIPPA LITTLE, LACHLAN MACKENNON, ADAM THORPE  
New Chatto Poets  
79pp. Chatto and Windus. £4.95.  
070113080 6

The new poets (or the male ones, at least) still seem to be coming up Martian: not all of them, and not all the time, but two of the individual collections here and several pages of the Chatto anthology are populated by mowers which exhale green exclamation marks, curtains which swoon, ploughs with rigor mortis, and similar phenomena. No doubt it is fun for the poets themselves to play this game, but the rest of us may wonder why they are so willing to let themselves be seen using someone else's style and so convinced that what things look like is more important than what experiences feel like. An unfortunate side-effect is that the reader may develop an almost prurient tendency to suspect all metaphors (which are or course a normal, healthy and often welcome element in poetry) of being derivative.

One poet who is free of this shadow is Stephen Roper. *Idols* is not without either metaphors or influences, but the metaphors are apt and unforced and the influences unobtrusive: French, perhaps (Romer lives in France), with an occasional whiff of Yeats. Other writers and their creations abound, however, as subject-matter: the first poem in the book puns on Stephen Dedalus and his Greek mythological counterpart, with the au-

thor seeing himself as an Icarus with frozzled wings; subsequent poems bring in Proust, Kierkegaard, Propertius, Abelard, Emma Bovary, Rilke and Corbière, among others. If these sound like heavy presences they are not burdensome in context — Roper's poems are light on their feet and graceful in their twists and turns, even when their mood is brooding. The first half of the collection, in flexible, loosely rhymed couplets, consists largely of first-person meditations (often set in cafés or bars) on the narrator's obsession with a young woman ("the girl", as he calls her). Part Two begins with a group of short pieces recording a depression or prolonged withdrawal, elegantly done but claustrophobic in their paralysed despair. There is, though, an opening-out at the end into livelier areas: a wedding party in the Parc Monceau, old ladies grimly enjoying bridge and bracing walks at Hythe, and several love poems including "The Well", which ends:

I tried, and failed, to see how we remain transparent like that, as if our modest god who has no tongue could tell. I know there is a flood that moves with us. That it is in the flood, at swim from you to me. That it may not have a name.

Alan Moore is an Irish poet, at twenty-six a few years younger than Roper and distinctly less mature stylistically. Certainly he is energetic and inventive, as the blurb claims, but the inventiveness is too often misdirected into a devoted impersonation of Craig Raine, and the energy has been insufficiently disciplined by self-criticism. *Opla* is a muddled collection in which finished poems and successfully organized sequences are haphazardly interspersed among fragments, exercises and assorted jottings, often bundled together into little groups under catch-all headings such as "Trois", "Two" and "Scents". Some of these (but not enough) have a bizarre and inexplicable charm, more a matter of instinctive rhythmic rightness than anything planned; Moore seems to be that risky thing, a hit-or-miss poet who is unable to judge whether he has hit or missed. His most ambitious pieces, two gutsy, crackling sequences of formal sonnets, are marred by an overloading of adjectives and by occasional dreadfully bathetic phrases. Unfortunately the best things in this book are buried here and there in the middle of it, by which point the easily discouraged reader may well have given up; nor is a glance at the last page ("you see subtly magnified / scintilla cells blurring blend") reassuring. If Moore had been persuaded to ditch his juvenilia or to postpone his first collection by a year or two, might he

have avoided possible future regrets.

Douglas Houston was one of the Hull poets included in the Bloodaxe anthology *A Rumoured City*, and although he now lives in Wales and acknowledges weather and seasons, his is an urban sensibility. "Her green fist to my throat, the rural muse / would have me believe that nature is enough", he writes, denying it. "Urban" in his case does not mean metropolitan: he is healthily indifferent to passing fashions and writes in a straightforward, durable style capable of several registers, from the elegiac (as in a group of tactfully judged poems for his dead father) to the blackly comic. Both of these modes combine in an entertaining ode to a van sold for scrap: "So farewell now old heap, have fun as tins...". His off-beat imagination is at home in sheds, bed-sitters, fairgrounds and hospital wards, the most characteristic and generally most effective poems in this collection are plausible and sometimes very funny monologues by fringe-dwellers or outright nutters. In his own persona Houston occasionally seems a little uneasy, and falls into clogged-up sentences or flat formalities, but not for long.

R. A. Maitre is one of the sub-Martians: "a crucified scarecrow / bows out with hypothermia...". A pity, because he could probably write quite well if he tried less hard. He goes in for descriptions of rural and coastal scenes employing a vocabulary enriched, in approved creative-writing-class fashion, with vigorous verbs and unexpected nouns ("brazes" occurs as both). He is also rather keen on "triangles of nylon" (a bikini) and "triangles of underwear". His verse-forms tend to be rhymed but have variable line-lengths — a habit no doubt influenced by his penchant for writing clerihews (not included in this collection: the nearest we get is a parody of Larkin's "Toads" poem).

Richard Godden has a more critical attitude to figures of speech; one poem in a group collectively called "Foras" begins "Here's an exercise in simile; / no metaphor to trick a root system / into the human heart and leave it budding, / blossoming there." The central section in this collection makes use of overheard speech (some of which we may doubt was ever actually overheard) and crams it into dense, jagged, often staccato verse full of Empsonian connotations and linguistic games-playing. Politics and history are also part of the weave; E. P. Thompson is a presence. *Breathing Exercises* is subtitled "an argument"; it is poetry written to a thesis, difficult, intellectual, wilful, but at times fascinating.

New China Poets is a box of sparks, a rep-

resenting the feelings of a convalescent not quite ready for the return to health, while at the same time remaining vividly (and amusingly) the sea. His other poems, refreshingly varied, include a convincing impersonation of Hopkins wrestling with his soul, a picture of sad lust in a motel, a social study of Winchester, and a compact, slimline sonnet on a childhood embarrassment with an edge to it.

Alan Jenkins has a differently sophisticated talent, cooler and less traditional. His poems present social and sexual occasions in terms of dreamlike shifts and Ovidian transformation: otter-women and cat-women feature in his erotic poems, and snake-men in a sinister fable of seduction. There are also literary encounters (Forster meets Cavafy in a subtly composed and poignantly remote view through a camera lens), and a telling little oblique elegy for the poet's father.

Jo Shapcott shows a taste for innocent neprophilia, not only in her strikingly titled but overlong "Electroplating the baby" and in a poem about a drowned child ("a beauty: pearl dead, fish eye...") but in the seductively chilling last lines of "Late snow", about sheep. Five poems, though, are not enough to judge her poetry. By where are the rest? Pippa Little's elusive, slippery poems are harder to grasp, at least when they deal with unexplained encounters between people in images of visual (often domestic) detail; but "Witch burning country" works well on a simpler level, and "Minauer" lingers in the mind.

Peter McDonald, from Belfast, needs to outgrow the influences of Longley, Muldoon and other compatriots; he has time — he is only twenty-four. Adam Thorpe and Dominic Fisher have both fallen for Mrtrianism, but they wear it with charm. Thorpe is the more accomplished of the two and has the wider range, taking in acutely re-invented memories of childhood (beginning in his poem on the Quai d'Orsay), work in an egg-packing station, and Roman soldiers talking in weirdly convincing dialect. He, like several others here, seems almost ready for a collection of his own.

## Wittily and weightily

David Nokes

DOUGLAS LANE PATEY and TIMOTHY KEAGAN (Editors)  
Augustan Studies: Essays in honour of Irvin Ehrenpreis  
270pp. Golden Cockerel Press/Cornwall Books. £24.50.  
08713272 X

The untimely death of Irvin Ehrenpreis in July 1985 lends a special poignancy to this collection of Augustan studies published in his honour. Originally intended as a mark of esteem, they have been transformed into a tribute to his memory. It is, without doubt, a fitting and distinguished tribute, which gathers together many leading Augustan scholars from Britain and the United States. And if some of the essays have the leisurely, amiable air often encountered in *Festschriften*, others are fresh and sharp in their critical approach.

Among the best and most important essays in the book is Emrys Jones's study of Dryden's Lucretian style. In recent years critical tastes have been increasingly shifted away from Dryden's early satires and towards his later translations. Yet little care has been taken to distinguish the different tones and styles that Dryden adopts in his versions of the great Latin poets, Virgil, Juvenal and Lucretius. The current orthodoxy concerning Dryden's Lucretius, advanced by Norman Austin (1968) and Earl Miner (1969), that Dryden softened the force of the Roman poet's verse by Christianizing him. "Lucretius... once baptised by Dryden in the English Thames, rises up from the waters one of the strongest of Christian apologists", writes Austin. Not so, declares Jones, arguing that it was precisely the serious-mindedness of this "zealously devout atheist" which stimulated Dryden's imagination. Analysing certain passages from Dryden's version of the Third Book "Against the Fear of Death" he describes the "perpetual torrent" of Dryden's style as an irresistible flood of argument. What was especially congenial to Dryden about Lucretius, he concludes, was "the fusion of satire and consolatory elegy, the impatience with human weakness and at the same time the sense of involvement with it".

Ralph Cohen and Susan Staves offer interesting essays on themes of generic mutation. Cohen charts the literary evolution of George Barnwell from a raw apprentice in a ballad of 1624 to become the full-blown commercial hero of George Lillo's bourgeois tragedy *The London Merchant*, 1731. He shows how a simple and traditional ballad, which cautions against the wiles of harlots, is "sedimented" in a literary process which tells us a great deal about changing audiences and moral attitudes. Staves studies the sedimentary layers of Restoration plays embedded in the scenes and sentiments of eighteenth-century novels. There is, however, some exaggeration in her class analysis of the significance of sentiments which descend from the declamations of tragic heroes to the commonplaces of middle-class characters. Thus when Richardson allows the corner servant Pamela to discuss faults in the plays of Dryden and Steele, Staves comments: "there is a cultural revolution worthy of Madame Mao!" Yet the essay is lively and perceptive, and the discussion of the importance of Restoration plays in providing role-models for eighteenth-century marriages continues themes she has studied elsewhere.

Christopher Ricks's essay is a characteristic display of verbal virtuosity which piques on puns and somersaults over parallel terms. Entitled "The Wit and Weight of Clarendon", it locates the peculiar force of Clarendon's prose in a pattern of verbal niceties, "not jingling but jingling". Wit and weight are presented as dancing partners in a style which "vigilant through 360 degrees — spins round to catch every tangent of sound and sense". Ricks's "vigilant eye identifies rows of similar partners; and contra, advise and advertise, except, and exempt, and — a particularly felicitous example — conversion and conversation. Alluding to Aristotle's description of this style as "a delicate Asiatism", Ricks reproduces Arnold's quotation from a famous passage in Clarendon's *History* describing Falkland's "loving for peace". Sitting among his friends, when, after a deep silence and frequent sighs,

he would with a shrill and sad accent ingeminate the word *Peace, Peace*. "Pnce Arnold — pace, pace", comments Ricks in parenthesis, going on to note how Clarendon's unusual verb incited a fashion for "artificial ingemination" among his imitators. This essay begins with the word "roguish", an appropriate adjective for an exercise in piratical paronomasia which illuminates by dazzling.

Maximilian Novak and Timothy Keagan rake over two long-running critical debates. Novak attempts a new angle on the standard question "How ironic is Defoe?" by postulating a "Sincerity Crisis" in Britain between 1715 and 1724 occasioned by the Bangorian controversy. He finds "programmatic evidence" in both the *Farther Adventures* and *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe* of religious arguments associated with this dispute. "It was the Bangorian controversy", he asserts, which turned Defoe towards a type of fiction which "fused a vivid presentation of [the] real world" with a "focus on the inner life". Keagan's essay offers an equally sincere reading of the *Verses on the Death of Dr Swift*. He argues that all those who have treated the poem as ironic are mistaken. On the contrary, he asserts, Swift's self-portrait here as a man of disinterested virtue should be taken at face value "as literal truth". The famous claim that "he lash'd the vice but spar'd the name" is safely defused of its ironic charge by a footnote gloss of "to spare" as meaning "to refrain from denouncing or exposing in strong terms". Keagan ignores the fact that Swift's further claim that "malice never was his aim" is flatly contradicted by his simultaneous letter to Bathurst confessing that "revenge, malice, envy and hatred and all uncharitableness" comprised his chief diversions. Keagan believes that those who insist on reading the poem's final encomium as ironic "have been hard put" to explain the presence of some genuine truths among its specious assertions. Such an argument, though, sadly misses one of Swift's favourite satiric ploys, which is the teasing conflation of truths, half-truths and downright lies in his rhetorical formulas.

In another essay on Swift, Margaret Anne Doody investigates parallels between Virgil's *Georgics* and *Gulliver's Travels*. Several details, from the King of Brobdingnag's enthusiasm for agriculture to the hierarchical colour-bar among the Houyhnhnms seem to echo passages in Virgil's poem, she writes.

Roger Lonsdale offers observations on Jonathan Richardson's *Mourning Thoughts* and J. D. Freeman supplies a bibliographical study of Johnson's numerous proposals and prospectuses. There's a sparky essay by Peter Steele entitled "The Performing of *Tristram Shandy*", which seeks to rival Ricks in verbal conjuring. "Quicksilver", he observes, "is only a phoneme away from quacksilver" — which prompts the further observation that phoneme itself is only one phoneme away from phoney. The single transferable phoneme makes a ghostly re-appearance in G. A. Star's essay on "Sentimental De-Education" which remarks that "the margins of a typical Bildungsroman are strewn with unteachables". Leopold Damrosch's study of the "ultimate lessons" of *Rasselas* however, is solidly conventional. The volume is completed by two elegant and diverting essays by Rachel Trickett on visual descriptions, and, appropriately for this memorial work, by Mary Lascelles on epitaphs and elegies.

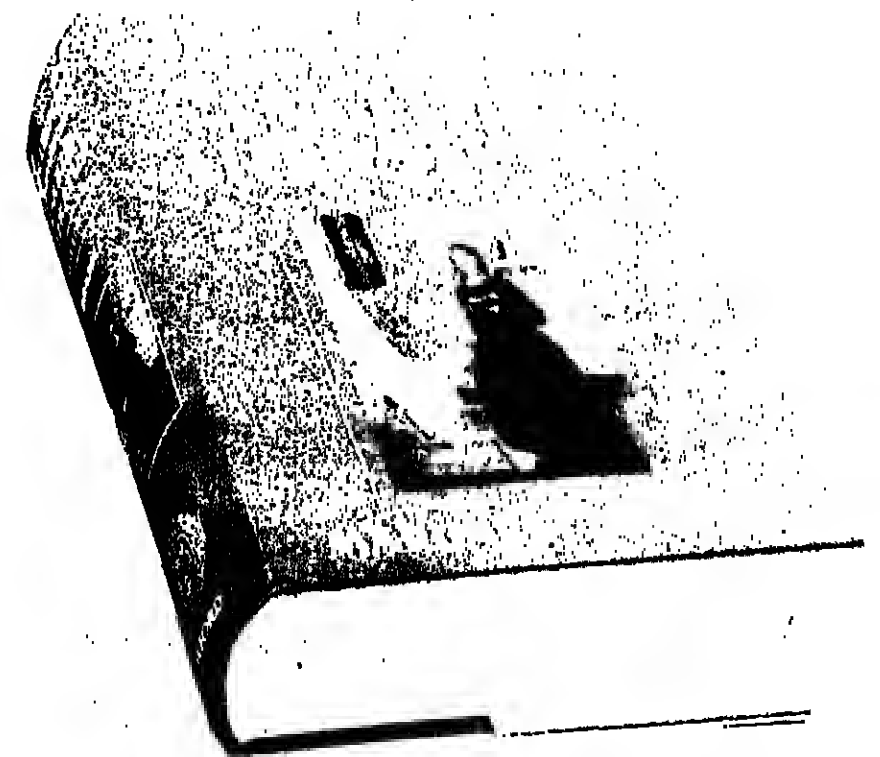
Full of sound Augustan qualities, the volume exudes — if the phrase be not too Asiatic — the wit and weight of contemporary Augustan scholarship.

The University of Munster is in the process of establishing an international centre for Swift studies to be named "The Ehrenpreis Center for Swift Studies" (at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster). The centre is based on library material and papers donated by David Ehrenpreis. The centre plans to publish an annual journal of *Swift Studies*, as well as holding academic seminars. The centre invites submissions from those willing to become Friends of the Ehrenpreis Centre. Further details can be obtained from Dr Heinz J. Vinken, English Seminar, Johannstr. 12-20, 4800 Münster, W. Germany.

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